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*SOME LESSONS OF THE
PRESENT CRISIS*

BY

ARCHDEACON PATERSON-SMYTH

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AUTHOR OF

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A PARABLE OF THE NATIONS

I

A PARABLE OF THE NATIONS

“Who art thou that repliest against God ? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus ? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay to make one part a vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour ?”—
ROM. ix. 20, 21.

I

WE are to study to-day a Parable of the Nations as we watch the Divine Potter on the potter's field of Europe, moulding the nations on His potter's wheel. St. Paul was watching his own nation on that wheel 1,900 years ago when he wrote the passage which I have quoted for my text.

This passage has caused more perplexity to inquiring minds than perhaps any other passage in the Bible. It has made sad many hearts that God has not made sad. For it has been read as a proclamation of God's absolute sovereignty irrespective of the free will of man ; and so has been made the foundation of Calvin's ghastly creed, that God has destined

some men to eternal heaven and other men to eternal hell, for His own glory, to show forth His power. His decree is irresistible. He is the Potter with the helpless clay, and He shapes it as He will for good or evil.

And when the passionate cry of an outraged Conscience rang out, Why should God do such an unfair thing merely because He is almighty, the crushing answer has been given in the words of my text—I have heard it given—some of you have heard it given: “Nay, but who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the lump of clay?”

So men have been silenced. But Conscience has not been silenced. Conscience always rebelled until at last it forced on men the conviction that such interpretation was impossible.

I am not concerned with this doctrine today. The controversy is practically dead. But in passing let me give you this piece of advice. Whenever a doctrine that clashes with the Christian conscience is presented to you as from the Bible, hold back. Conscience is the Divine faculty within you. Scripture is the Divine revelation without you, given for the training of Conscience. Both are from God. When they clash something is wrong. The shrinking of Conscience is a Divine warning to cry Halt!

II

I have nothing to do to-day with Calvinistic controversies, and only use this well-known text in order to point you to the reference in the margin which sends you back to the Scripture that St. Paul had in his mind. In my text he is speaking of the nation Israel. God is the Potter. The nation of Israel is as the clay in His hand, and when St. Paul asks, "Hath not the Potter power over the clay?" the margin of your Bible refers you back to Jer. xviii. 6, where the same question was asked 700 years before. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" saith the Lord. "Behold, as the clay in the hand of the potter, so are ye in My hand, O house of Israel."

If you read the passage carefully at home I think you will find that it contains no such immoral teaching as men have attributed to St. Paul. At any rate it is interesting to see what it taught to Jeremiah:

"The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, Arise, go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. Then I went, and the potter wrought his work upon the wheels. And when the vessel was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again into another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it."

I want you to think of this parable. It is

clearly a Parable of the Nations—a Parable of National Election and of the power of God and the wise, patient rule of God over the races of the earth. The Prophet is thinking of his own nation. It was a dark, discouraging time. The shadow of the coming Captivity was falling upon Israel. Kings and people were going from bad to worse. All God's promises seemed broken. And the Prophet whom He had sent is bowed in bitterness of soul. "God has forsaken us. God has not helped us." He actually dares to reproach God in his passionate complaint, "Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived."

Such was his mood when there came to him the inner prompting which he recognised as the word of the Lord. "Go down to the potter's house." So he went down to the Valley of Hinnom, where he saw a potter at work. The potter had a certain design in his mind as he flung each shapeless lump of clay on the wheel. Whatever the design, it failed. "The vessel was marred in the hand of the potter." There was some defect, some grit, some stiffness of the clay that resisted the plastic guidance of the wheel and hand. So the vessel was marred. But was the potter baffled? Did he cast it away in anger at the failure? No. Patiently, persistently, he continued his work. "He turned and made it into another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it." If the clay would not take

the shape he designed he would make something else of it, something inferior, but the best that it was now fit for. Perhaps what he was making into a vase for the table of the King he now made into a bowl for the washing of the feet.

Such was the parable acted before the Prophet. And, as he watched that patient potter persistently making the best of his stubborn clay, instantly, by Divine inspiration, the meaning flashed on him, not of God's irresistible sovereignty and power, but of God's never-tiring patience and love. "The word of the Lord came unto me ; O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter ? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in My hand, O house of Israel."

This was the meaning that Jeremiah got from the parable. What a shame that men have blasphemously misread it ! It was certainly a parable of God's power over the clay—but of that power used in patient loving-kindness to the nations. In the simple potter before him he saw the Great Potter all down the history of the world moulding the destiny of nations on His wheel. For each lump of clay the Artist Potter had a design. But each lump was not mere dead clay. It had an inner quality, a power to yield to or resist the working of the Potter's hand. That Potter had designed Israel as a lamp to bear light to the nations. Israel had refused its high

calling and was marred in the hands of the Potter. Patiently He turned and made it into another vessel. The nation was still being moulded on the wheel. God would make the best of it that could possibly be made.

There is a sterner side to the teaching. Later on, in the next chapter, we have the completion of the parable. The Prophet stands before the people with a finished, hardened jar, no longer the plastic clay to be moulded, but the finished, kiln-dried vessel to be moulded no more. It was a threat against final impenitence in the nation, a vision of what should be when the day of grace was past. "Then shalt thou break this bottle in the sight of the men, for thus saith the Lord of Hosts, so will I break this people as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again."

Now we have reached the view-point for understanding St. Paul. In his mind is this solemn teaching about the nations. Like his great predecessor he is applying it to Israel. A new world is opening with the coming of Christ. God is still moulding the clay. The nation is still revolving on the wheel. And the Christ was born a Jew. Who can tell how the history of the world might have been changed if Israel had even now risen to her high privileges! But her blindness and prejudice and hardness of heart prevented. Says Paul: "Who shall challenge that doom of

the Almighty? Who art thou that repliest against God? Hath not the Potter power over the clay?"

III

Brethren, I bring you back to-day to the Potter's Field to sit with Jeremiah and St. Paul, learning the parable of the nations, the Divine "philosophy of history." To us as to them has come a national crisis. Never before has there been so much thought and study and perplexity about our own nation and the other great nations. Where is the rule of God in this infernal tumult? Has Satan got the dominion? Has Christianity broken down? Is God gone away? Every day we are studying the papers. But the journalist can only tell us the happenings on the surface. God's inspired Word takes us deeper and higher. We need to look deeper into the well-springs of nations' actions. And we need to look higher into their relations with God.

For surely it is a solemn and sobering lesson, as well as a hopeful and encouraging lesson, which Paul and Jeremiah learned—that nations arise not by chance and human will—that nations cannot control destiny by any brute force—that nations are in the Potter's hand—that it is He who placed each upon the wheel. There is a calling and election for each. And the foundation purpose of that election is ever

the same. The first call of a nation recorded is that of Israel. And there the eternal purpose of all national election is proclaimed. "I will bless thee, that thou mayest be a blessing. I have called thee to take thy place among the nations of the earth, that in thee and in thy seed should all the people of the earth be blessed."

Would to God that the great nations of earth would remember that this is God's high calling—that this is the Potter's purpose in the moulding, from the clay, vessels for noble uses—for the sake of mankind. No nation is called into being for itself alone, but for the world's blessing, for the general good. So far as any nation or church has been true to its calling, true to the eternal law of Righteousness and Service, it has been a vessel made to honour. So far as it has thwarted the Divine purpose by unfaithfulness, self-seeking, and sensuality, it has been a vessel marred in the hand of the Potter, and, if still persistent in evil, a vessel to be shattered and swept away in broken fragments from the earth. No righteous nation has ever been destroyed—no evil nation has finally survived.

Inspiration bids us seek in all history the working of God's laws. The Bible says God set up Pharaoh in Egypt, and called Cyrus to do His will in ancient Persia. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger," is the call of Jehovah to the Assyrian empire.

We believe that God called Greece to teach undying lessons of beauty—that God called the great Roman Empire to bring into order the riot of savage peoples; and, when Rome sank into decay and impurity and could no longer be of use in the destinies of the world, the Goths and Vandals and Attila, the “Scourge of God,” brake her in pieces like a potter’s vessel. We believe that mighty Spain has sunk into obscurity because the vessel was marred in the hand of the Potter. We learn that these things were the work of God acting out the old drama in the Valley of Hinnom.

IV

With that thought we look solemnly on Europe to-day, as the nations whirl madly on the Potter’s wheel. What will the nations be after this terrible convulsion? None of them will ever be the same again. We see Russia with her brutal, barbarous history of the past. But her own writers have been unveiling her inner history this past year. We see the Czar and the people combining to restrain the Bureaucracy. We see her people to-day crowding the churches in prayer. We see her offering freedom to Jews, offering nationality to Poland. Is it only a clever political device, or is God moulding Russia into another vessel? The Potter’s hand has been on France since the great days of Charlemagne. Much of

good has been, and much of evil : in the days of the later kings cruel oppression among the people, titled harlotry in the court ; she was rotting in her slime. To-day her Government is hostile to religion, but her people are praying in the churches. France has had sore lessons. She is bearing her lot to-day with dignity and courage. Men thought that the Revolution would have shattered her for ever. But the hand of the patient Potter is resting on her still. Will the clay be moulded yet into a vessel for the King to bless the nations and to be a blessing ?

Germany with her brave and enlightened people was surely called to great things and has accomplished great things. Germany with her rationalism and unbelief, and what seems to us to be defiance of God, has surely chosen low things—selfish and dishonourable things that have made her a curse and a hissing among the nations. Think of God's call in the election of nations. "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." Think of the bitter irony of it in Germany to-day. What will be the result of this terrible moulding, with the clay swelling up against the hand of the Potter ? Will the patient Potter turn and mould it into another vessel ? Will God in her adversity give repentance and grace and a holier even if a humbler future ? Or, as some people expect, will it be a final crash ? Will He break it in pieces as the old potter's vessel

in the story, and then gather up the fragments in His infinite love to remould them in another life? For the Great Potter is also the Great Father of us all, though we have rebelled against Him.

And what of our own nation? It is easy to be Pharisaically righteous over the faults of others. What of ourselves? In the mysterious calling and election of God, Britain is the elect nation of the world to-day. We say it in all wonder and humility. For it is not we, but God who has done it. We know not why. Just as we don't know why one man is born in a princely home and another, no worse than he, is born in a slum—so we don't know why a little island in the Atlantic mists, which might well be but a fishing station or one of the little appendages of some foreign despot, should be the proudest empire of the world—or why it should bask in the light of Christianity for fifteen centuries while poor Africa and India are in the darkness of heathendom. We know not. That is the mystery of God's election. The Potter has power over the lump of clay to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour.

But we know that *noblesse oblige*, that a high call means a great responsibility, and we acknowledge humbly at the coronation of our kings that our power has been given us for the blessing of men. We have had stories in our history that we would like to forget.

In recent years we have been criticised sharply for carelessness and irreligion. And yet somehow, with all our sins, there is deep in the heart of the nation a sense of God and Righteousness and Duty. Just now we have been led to do one of the righteous things in our history with unselfish hearts for the sake of right. And the sharp tool of pain has come in our moulding on the wheel. Every week comes the long list of dead and dying. In her anxiety and sorrow and bereavement to-day may God help our nation to remember the high purpose of her calling. God grant her to be moulded into a nobler vessel.

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget.

V

I am here to-day not to preach politics or to prophesy about nations, but to remind you that the Lord is King be the people never so impatient, that He sitteth between the cherubim be the earth never so unquiet, that history is not a mere chaos of brute forces, but the working out of a righteous order under the eye of God. It is solemnising and helpful to remember it as you read of the war crisis in your daily paper. As to Jeremiah and Paul, so to every believing Christian man the study of history, the reading of the newspaper at this critical time, is a going down to the potter's

house in the Valley of Hinnom to watch the potter shaping the clay upon his wheel.

One thought more. Do you not think this parable of nations may legitimately be applied to individuals too, leaving room for repentance and hope and the freedom of the individual will? As I look into your faces to-day I seem to see that scene in the Valley of Hinnom. I see the wheel of time spinning round so fast that it fairly startled us as the weeks fly past. I see the Artist Potter standing by the wheel,—the earthly wheel on which the vessels of Heaven are to be shaped. He has placed you and me there, my brothers, for the moulding of character by the keen edge of the circumstances of life. Sometimes we find these circumstances, which are God's graving tool, keen and they hurt us. Sometimes in our flaws and warpings we feel the vessel growing marred in the hand of the Potter. And this is the prophet's message to us all to-day, to individuals as well as to nations: Be hopeful. Be grateful, as you think of the loving patience of God. It is not mere cold circumstances that you have to do with. The hand of the Father is on the graving tool. By the discipline of life, by warning and reproofs, by failures and successes, by varying work and fresh opportunities, He is moulding you as the wheel of life goes round. Oh, brethren, don't you see it as you look back on your life?

And if through your fault the vessel is marred

He will not give you up. Again and again does the Potter turn to mould and remould the stubborn clay. Even if He can never make of it now the best that He intended, He will make it the second best, and, if that fails, the third best, and so on and on while any hope remains to save it from being broken as a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again.

For the Potter is the Father who loves His children and cannot bear that any one of them should perish. Thanks be to God.

THE LORD IS KING

II

THE LORD IS KING

“The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient. He sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet.”
—Ps. xcix. 1.

I

THE Book of Psalms, the hymn-book of the Jewish Church, has come down to us through the ages, expressing the highest thoughts of holy men of old clinging in earnest devotion to their God. We have no information as to who wrote this hymn or that, or what circumstances called forth any of them. We can only guess by internal evidence—by entering into their spirit and putting ourselves in the writer’s place.

As I read this psalm I picture to myself a troubled time in the nation and in the bigger world outside, wars and troubles and adversities of some kind—a people frightened and despondent—and one of their poet sages flinging out the ringing challenge of his faith to be sung amongst his compatriots—“The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient. He sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth

never so unquiet. The Lord is great in Zion and high above all people." No matter what happens, he says, believe in God. Just as in our own day Browning has stirred us with his deep belief—

God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world.

Brethren, we need to-day, and I fear we shall need it still more later on, this deep strong faith in God. To us have indeed come solemn days. A few months ago life seemed very ordinary and commonplace, nothing much happening, nothing to excite us. To-day it seems that the story of our time will go down for centuries as one of the great crises of history, when the whole civilised world stood up. Never before has there been such a war as this; never have twenty millions of men gone fighting; never have there been such discoveries of science to use for good or evil—tremendous explosives, airships and submarines, and wireless telegraphy—God's good gifts to men prostituted to the service of evil. The recent splendid mastery of the air is used for dropping bombs upon tortured people; the wireless, for which we were so grateful three months ago as the great saviour of ships at sea, is used to tell where men may catch and kill their brethren.

No wonder we are despondent as we look upon it all. No wonder some lose faith as

they see, after nineteen centuries of Christianity, all the so-called Christian nations of the earth girding themselves for slaughter—holding their millions of men like dogs in leash to let loose upon each other. We need to keep firm grip on our convictions—to steady ourselves by prayer and communion with God. “The Lord is King, be the world never so unquiet.”

II

I bid you to-day take fresh grip upon your faith. You will need it ere the war is done. Look back on what you have learned and experienced of the goodness of God and His long pains and patience with sinful men. If you hear men ask, Where is now thy God, when such things are allowed to happen?—What is the use of Christianity when its followers do such things?—remember first what this war is emphasising: that it is not Christianity that is to blame, but the lack of it. We are finding out that the world has been contenting itself with a thin veneer of Christianity—that only a small minority anywhere are living deeply the Christian life. The surface veneer has broken badly—what wonder?

Then remember also that God can only make high character through the freedom of the human will. Life is a contest of good and evil, and God is watching over it all, blessing

and inspiring noble hearts to self-sacrifice for the right, letting evil bring its punishment of remorse and dissatisfaction, but leaving man free. God's Holy Spirit is brooding over the world for blessing and good. But men are free to receive or reject Him. He could paralyse evil men and make them powerless for harm. But they would be no better men for that. Through misery and remorse, through gratitude and high aspirations, the Spirit of God is acting upon all men. But they must be left free.

Therefore we see the eternal contest. Sometimes we rejoice and thank God—when we see great cities planning health and happiness for their people; when we see the growing speed of Social Service; when we see, as we saw a few years ago in Canada, 4,000 men of all classes assembling in the Massey Hall in Toronto to plan for extending Christ's missionary kingdom—we rejoice that God's will is being done. And sometimes, as to-day, our hearts are sore and we sympathise with the deep pain of the Father in His disappointment with men. These are the ups and downs of the eternal contest between good and evil in the world.

But all the same, the Lord is King, the Lord is over-ruling, the Lord is dealing with the consciences of men, the Lord is taking care of the poor, helpless crowds who are being hurried into the Unseen in torture and sorrow. Aye,

trust God for them all. He is awaiting them at the other side. He will do the best for every one of them. And some day out of all this misery and sin God will bring good. More horror of and perhaps discontinuance of wars, more longing for a reign of peace on the earth, more solemn seriousness in a frivolous world and realising of the duty and destiny of man. That is the Church's message to the world to-day: "The Lord is King, be the people never so unquiet." And because He is King good shall finally triumph. One day evil shall be trampled down for ever and "God shall be all in all."

III

We are forced most reluctantly to take part in these horrors, Yes, forced, for there is a worse sight than that of a nation at war. It is the sight of a nation at peace because she is too selfish to risk her blood, to risk her commercial prosperity, and therefore is content to break her plighted word, to see her weaker neighbours destroyed, to see a daring, defiant militarism trampling on Europe. We desire no jingo spirit, we desire no glorification of war. We want peace, but peace may be bought too dear if the price is national honour. Britain did not buy peace at that price when she risked her very existence to save Europe in the days of Napoleon Bonaparte. And

Britain will not buy peace at that price to-day.

And Canada says, "God bless her, the Old Land is right, and we are going out to stand by her." And so the men of Canada are going out in their thousands. And you in this parish have your honourable share in this.

And the people at home are supporting the wives and children for them. I was in the Windsor Hotel at midnight on Friday when the teams of the Patriotic Fund made their report. It was a thrilling moment. They brought in not a million, but a million and half! The rich men gave their princely donations, the poor men gave their dollars and cents. One poor widow lady gave her old diamond ring, and it was auctioned enthusiastically on the spot for \$1,000. A servant girl gave her month's wages. A dirty little newsboy at the corner of Peel Street turned out his dirty little pocket and gave all he had—53 cents. That is how Canada feels about it.

It is the one relief in this war that we believe we are fighting for the right. We could not always say that of England's wars, but we can to-day. We believe that it would have been shameful for England to hold back. We believe that we can honestly ask God to judge our cause. It is because of that belief that Canadian men go forth to risk their lives. It is because of that belief that Montreal gave \$1,500,000 last week. It is because

of that belief that the Church is offering up her prayers.

Oh, I do trust that if this had been a war of selfish aggression on Britain's part we should have sternly opposed it. I do trust no enthusiastic legion would have come forward in Canada, no hypocritical prayers would have been offered in our churches. Let our prayer be always, "God defend the right—God break our swords in our hands if we are wrong. In this war in which we are engaging to-day may Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

IV

The Lord is King. The Lord is watching us. Trust we in God. Leave results with Him. Perhaps out of all this terrible trouble such good may come as we do not dream of to-day.

(1) The very horror and awfulness of it may lead to a new spirit in the world, to a crushing hatred of war. Already we were tending to it in the project of an international tribunal to which national disputes shall be submitted. It was a wise and noble thought. As Christianity grows the nations must come to this as individuals have already come. Long ago when individual men fell out they settled their quarrel with the knife or club—but soon they rose above this and appointed courts to judge and forced men to bring their quarrels

for fair judgment. Public opinion will tolerate nothing else. Public opinion is tending that way, too, for national disputes. A few years ago we thought we had gone far in this direction. Perhaps we were too hopeful. Perhaps it needed as terrible a lesson as this to startle humanity into nobler efforts. Already wise men are publicly saying that it will be the last war. God grant it, though it seems too much to hope yet.

(2) I see another possible good beginning already: There is also over the world to-day a pain and sorrow and solemn seriousness which surely ought to be good for us. Perhaps we have been too prosperous. We have been growing frivolous and luxurious. We have been caring too much for wealth and comfort and ease and pleasure. We have been forgetting too much of God and eternal things. We are losing our sense of our dependence on God. That is the main cause of this war. The religion of Germany is rotting, growing rationalistic and unitarian. The infidel teaching that is disturbing religion has come largely from Germany. In France, though the churches are crowded with humble Christians this week, the Government is indifferent to religion. The clergy are fighting in the trenches. A very few are permitted to act as chaplains if they choose to go at their own cost and take their chances. The attitude of the Government amounts to this: "We don't

see much use in your ministrations, but a small number of you may go if you want to." But before we criticise France and Germany let us look at home. Is there not with us too as a people too much indifference to God—too much forgetfulness of Him? We need to be taught by some terrible lesson where all this leads. And now there has come to us—not mere selfish fear about ourselves and our dangers—but deep, generous, sympathetic pain for tortured men and heart-broken women, and widespread loss and sadness through the world—a sense of the sins of humanity which have brought this scourge—the solemn thought of hundreds of thousands hurried suddenly into the Unseen. We have not felt this much yet, but already English wives and mothers have nearly 20,000 to cry over. The poor German wives and mothers have, it is said, 200,000. God comfort and help them all. God give us all grace to be solemn and serious and to think of God and our eternal destinies.

(3) Perhaps, too, this terrible trouble will teach us to try the power of prayer. Before now a great war has brought out the power of some new weapon of destruction. God grant that this great war may bring out the power of that weapon which is in the hands of all of us—the weapon of prayer.

Brethren, get to your prayers. Our whole church throughout Canada is called next week to a day of earnest intercession. Make

use of it. In your family prayers, in your private prayers, bring this war before God. The more people that pray the greater will be the answer.

Let us pray for wisdom and grace for our rulers—pray for the brave soldiers and sailors in their danger—pray for the heart-broken families, our own and our enemies'—and commit to the Great Father in humble trust the souls of those who, fighting for their country, are being flung in thousands into the Unseen with little time to think or pray for themselves. And in all your prayers pray especially that God will grant us an abiding peace!

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING IN
WAR TIME

III

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING IN WAR TIME

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Ps. xcii. 1).

I

SO says the Dominion of Canada to-day. Listen to this proclamation from the Government at Ottawa :

"Whereas it hath pleased Almighty God in His great goodness to vouchsafe this year unto Our Dominion of Canada a bountiful harvest and other blessings :

"We, therefore, considering that these blessings enjoyed by our people throughout the said Dominion do call for a public and solemn acknowledgment, have thought fit, by and with the advice of Our Privy Council for Canada, to appoint a day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest and other blessings with which Canada has been favoured this year ; and we do invite all our loving subjects throughout Canada to observe the said day as a day of General Thanksgiving."

Brethren, be thankful for this national proclamation. All too rare are our acknowledgments to God, and it is a happy and hopeful thing for Canada that not from the Church alone, but from the Parliament of the people should emanate this annual declaration that "it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." Long may Canada proclaim it! Blessed is the nation that is in such a case. Yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God and are not ashamed to say so.

There has been some hesitation this year about it in England and here. In England the Archbishop of Canterbury had to be asked for direction. This year, said some, we are in no mood for Thanksgiving. Our boys and our husbands are going to the war. The fate of civilisation seems hanging in the balance. The horrors of the battlefield are rending our hearts—the harvest-fields of Europe are turning into cemeteries. Our faith in God Himself is wavering. Why does He not stop it all? At any rate we are not in the mood for Thanksgiving just now.

You can understand that feeling. But when you stop to consider, you know it is wrong. If the Father above is pouring His gifts upon His children, should we cease to be thankful just because some of the children are fighting and bullying and making the whole family unhappy? That is the Father's sorrow as well

as ours ; nay, much more than ours. Shall we make things better by dissociating ourselves from Him and forgetting His goodness to us, and His patience in the pain that men are causing Him in Europe to-day ? If He does not stamp out this war and paralyse the wrong-doers, cannot we trust Him a little where we cannot see ? Has He not taught us that the battle between Right and Wrong is the central fact of the universe ? War is not always wrong. If a brute is torturing a child or ill-using a girl it is our business to strike or kill, or, if necessary, be killed. That is the will of God. If Wrong raises its head to crush and tyrannise in Europe, it is the will of God that true men should fight that wrong, and, if necessary, suffer and die, and trust themselves with Him into whose hands they are hurried in the great new life beyond. While evil is rampant war for the Right is God's eternal purpose.

Brethren, keep your heads. Don't be stupid. Don't say what one said to me the other day : " We have lost faith in prayer. All our churches are praying to God to stop this tragedy and pain and blood, and God does not answer." There are times when only by tragedy and pain and blood can God's eternal will be done. And this seems such a time. It is for us to be sure that we are fighting for the Right. And then trust. And then be still. In all this wild turmoil of madness and horror,

“be still, and know that I am God.” “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

II

All the more in these mad days when men are defying God and declaring might is right, all the more at such time should we kneel at our thanksgiving to remind ourselves of our helplessness and of the goodness of God. If the men responsible for this war had been remembering that, we should have a very different story to-day. Ay, and if we ourselves were oftener remembering it.

Our helplessness, God's goodness. Take the lowest thing, our food. Every year at this autumn time the whole world is within a few months of being starved to death. There is never more than a few months' supply left. If God forgot His harvest gift one single year all mankind would be dying in the agonies of hunger long before another harvest could save us. The Israelites learned their helplessness that day of starvation when the manna came. The Irish learned it in the famine of sixty years ago when the people were dropping dead of starvation by the roadside because one little part only of their harvest failed.

And we are utterly helpless. We can do nothing to save ourselves. All the powers of science could not make one little seed. We can but simply take the seed that God gives us

and lay it down on the earth as on an altar of God, and then go away and wait—for God. And in the quiet night God lays His hand on that altar of earth and whispers His command into the moist, dark soil, and lo, fifty grains of wheat arise from the grave where the one grain died!

It is all miracle—wonderful, romantic miracle—as much so as the giving of the manna long ago. And surely it is of special purpose that God keeps us thus dependent—that we may realise our relation to Him. Surely we ought to be religious people. Ordinary gratitude and sense of dependence ought to have won us to Him. But we are careless and ungrateful. We often forget. And we are trying to-day to pull ourselves together and to remember.

III

But you know the harvest is only a pretext to give a name to our Thanksgiving. We have far deeper things for which to thank our God. "He giveth us," says St. Paul, "life and breath and all things." See our absolute dependence. "He giveth us life"—and you lay your hand upon your heart and feel it opening and closing. "He giveth us breath"—and you feel your lungs rising and falling, all day long and all night long, when you have no control. If heart or lungs stopped for a

moment it would mean death, but you cannot prevent it. If you ask a wise physician why the heart opens and shuts and the lungs rise and fall he will tell you that no man knows, or if he be a man of reverent mind he will tell you, "My child, it is because you are in the hands of God, whose hand opens and closes, and gives you life and breath, and if He forgot you for a moment you would perish at once."

Life and breath and all things—as we said just now in the General Thanksgiving, "all the blessings of this life"—it would take some time to enumerate them all to the worst grumbler amongst us. The clever brain and skilful hand, the health and strength and happiness and enjoyment, the husband, the wife, the dear children in your home, the friends, the books, the countless things that make life pleasant. All the blessings of this life. Can we produce or keep them of ourselves? Are we not dependent on God for them? Shall we cease thanking Him because some of us are fighting and sinning?

IV

Then we move to higher things. The war has solemnised us all just now and made it easier to think of higher things. "And above all for His inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ." Does not it come like the touch of a soft hand in

benediction over the poor, mad world, over the selfishness and self-seeking that is drenching Europe in blood?

"We thank God for the self-sacrifice of the Christ, for His redemption of the world by the sacrifice of Himself."

Oh, I think that would stir us all and touch us all if we only could realise it. The Son of God saving us by the sacrifice of Himself. Bad as we all are, that would touch us. That would burst in a moment these mad, swollen notions of conquering might and national selfishness.

If between the armies of Europe to-day there suddenly appeared the black cross of Calvary—the dying Lord sacrificing Himself for sinful men—I think the war must cease within the hour.

We thank the Lord Christ to-day for the strongest motive power of the universe—the Son of God sacrificing Himself.

V

Just one thing more. Do not shirk a straight look at this terrible war in your thanksgiving as if you could thank God better by forgetting its horrors. Even in this war itself there is something for which to thank God.

(1) First of all, should not we be thankful that God is there for us to come to, with all

our troubles and anxieties? To those who are not accustomed to come this does not mean much, but to many of us it is surely worth much to feel that God is there, that Jesus has assured us again and again that One is listening and caring and sympathising. How could some of us get through life without that assurance?

(2) Again, be thankful that we are in this war with a righteous purpose—that is a great comfort. Our conscience is clear. It was a distinct choice between right and wrong. On the one side the ideals of the new philosophy—Might is Right and every land for itself; on the other the ideal of Jesus on the Cross—self-sacrifice for others' good. We say it in no Pharisaic spirit. We have little to boast of. We too have on other days fought for the wrong. We are not even now living up to our ideal. But, thank God, down deep in the heart of the nation is that national ideal, and we are humbly striving towards it. Britain has nothing to gain. She has everything to lose. Antwerp is fallen to-day. The bombs may any day be falling upon London. Britain is taking big risks to-day, as she did 100 years ago in Napoleon's day, to defend the weak, to keep her plighted word, to save Europe from despotism. In all honesty, with no sanctimonious hypocrisy, we thank God that we are out for the ideals of Christ.

(3) Be thankful for the spirit in your boys

and men in Canada that is sending them to face death for these ideals. They are not, as in other lands, compelled to go. They have chosen freely. Doubtless they are not all consciously thinking of Christ and His ideals. Doubtless with the boys there is much in the excitement of adventure. But underneath is the stern indignation against wrong, and the chivalrous desire to fight for the oppressed, and God will bless them for it; and the mothers and wives, too, who with agony in their hearts have offered them willingly for this battle of the Lord.

(4) Shall we not thank God, too, for the quiet, simple heroism and forgetfulness of self called forth in the war, which is surely of the Spirit of God? In spite of the censorship we catch glimpses of it. Poor, rough soldiers brought up in evil surroundings and with their low, barrack-yard morality at ordinary times, touch one sometimes to the heart. Here is a bit of a letter from the front. "We passed through heaps of dead and dying. One little boy with a shattered thigh was being tended and comforted by a big Irish soldier. That evening we were surrounded by a German force who called on us to surrender. They were five to one. 'Boys,' said the colonel, 'if you surrender now, never look me in the face again in this world, or in the next.' So we went at them, putting up just what we could remember of a little prayer

for the old mother at home if we should fall in the fight."

Ah, thank God there are other things in war beside hatred and cruelty. God was looking down on that broken lad in the big soldier's arms—and the colonel's homely challenge to his men—and the simple souls going out to die, utterly forgetting themselves, "just putting up what we could remember of a little prayer for the old mother at home if we should fall in the fight." Such things come not but through the Spirit of God.

So we thank God to-day with troubled hearts, with solemn thoughts, with our church stripped of all usual festive decoration. We thank God, and in the anxious days before us we will try to keep more at His feet.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

THE "BREAKDOWN OF CHRISTIANITY"

IV

THE "BREAKDOWN OF CHRISTIANITY"

"The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."—REV. xi. 15.

I

THAT is the inspired vision of the far-off future,—the victory of Christianity. Beside it I place men's despondent vision of to-day, the "Breakdown of Christianity." I hear the suggestion on all sides. Yesterday a thoughtful business man said to me, "I should not like to be a clergyman facing his people on Sunday knowing that this is the thought in their hearts." Now on this Missionary Anniversary I want you to consider this position.

There is an uneasy suspicion that religion is proving less effective than we hoped, that Christianity has failed us in this day of trial. After nineteen centuries of it the chief Christian nations of Europe are flying at each other's throats. Amid the shame of broken treaties, amid the horror and pain and mutilation and the piled-up heaps of dead on the battlefields of Europe, men say they are doubt-

ing the power of Christ. In fact, some say that the one thing they are not doubting is the power of the devil. Here are Christian nations making hell on earth. If their Christianity does not prevent them, what is the use of Christianity?

II

When we are calling men to self-sacrifice for the spread of Christianity this challenge cannot be ignored. But I would not take it too seriously. The moment you start to face it you feel that it is an exaggeration. Most of those who utter it do not quite mean all that they say. The earnest Christian living close to His Lord never dreams of asking such a question at all. He knows better. And when you question the man who is asking it in petulant impatience you will find that even he does not entirely mean it. For he knows in his heart what is the use of Christianity. His is a poor experience if he does not know how the real followers of Jesus have lived by their religion and been victorious over sin and sorrow, and made the world around them happier and better, and died in peace and in the love of God.

My brethren, the lesson of this war is not that the nations should disparage the power of Christianity, but rather that they should take shame to themselves for refusing it, that

they should come in white robes of penitence before God. "Father, forgive us—we did not know what we were doing."

And to us of this nation at any rate it is fitting that with our penitence should be a recognition of the power of Christ's religion when even the little that we have of it sends forth our country to one of the finest deeds in her history, sends tens of thousands out to lay down their lives for the right and hundreds of thousands to their knees in prayer, brings strength to countless hearts in the midst of their bereavements, makes the peoples of the world look up to this poor, faulty land of ours as a nation which at any rate stands for Righteousness.

III

But we are judging Christianity in Germany, men say. We claim that Germany is responsible for all this horror and misery and ruin, that Germany has broken her plighted word, and has trampled her weaker neighbour into the ground and is out in Europe to-day for the plunder of the nations. Yet Germany is a Christian land, the home of Luther's Reformation. The Kaiser and the ruling powers are orthodox members of the Lutheran Church. They use God's name and the sanctions of religion for their actions. The leaders among their clergy have written a proclamation to English Christians to justify

in the name of religion all that has been done. We have a right, men say, to judge Christianity by what it allows a Christian nation to do.

What have we to say? We have to say what I for one hate to say of a great and lovable people who in art and science and scholarship are leading the nations of Europe. If they boast of their "culture," there is some ground for their boast. But alas! ancient Greece and Rome have taught us how culture may exist without morality or religion. We have to say sorrowfully, but straightly and deliberately, Christianity is not responsible here. Because Christianity blocks the road in their dream of world-empire Germany is "throwing back" to its pagan ancestry, throwing back to the great old days when the Goths and Vandals and Attila, the Scourge of God, swept down for world-empire on the races of Europe.

Germany is reverting to type, going back from Christ to Odin. Her greatest teachers dream of a world-religion, a religion of Might, of valour, of daring deeds, a gospel of Napoleonism with which Christianity cannot live. Young Germany in the army and the universities is enthusiastic for these pagan ideals. You think that if Germany wins we shall suffer only loss of men and of territory. Nay, my brethren, if Germany in her present pagan spirit should become dominant in Europe, Christianity will be put back indefinitely.

You get hints of this in the extracts in your newspapers, from Treitschke, the greatest of German historians, and Nietzsche, their favourite and most influential philosopher, a bitter enemy of Christianity. But here is the position as sketched by Professor Cramb in his now famous lectures delivered last year when there was no thought of this war. He is a most attractive teacher and quite sympathetic with Germany's war ideals. But he does not like her religious ideals. Germany does not complain that Christianity has no power, but that it has too much and in a wrong direction. Its teaching of unselfishness and care for the weak is wholly subversive of Young Germany's ideal.

This, he says, is the attitude of Young Germany to-day: "It is reserved for us to resume in thought the creative rôle in religion which our race abandoned fourteen centuries ago when Judæa and Galilee cast their dreary spell. In the fifth century the German race made its great error of accepting the (Christian) religion of the nations it had conquered. Thus Germany's genius for religion has been arrested, stunted, thwarted. For thirty generations she has tried to live that faith, to see with eyes that were not her eyes, to worship a God which was not her God, to live with a world-vision that was not her vision, to strive for a heaven that was not her heaven.

"But the seventeenth century cast off Rome,

and the eighteenth century undermined Galilee. Strauss (the great German critic) finished the task that other Germans had begun, and so set Germany free from Christianity.

"Must Germany submit to this alien creed derived from an alien clime? Must she for ever confront the ages with her own genius for religion numbed and paralysed? In answer Nietzsche (our great philosopher and teacher) has cleared away the rubbish of 1,200 years of Christianity. Thus while preparing to found a world-empire Germany is also preparing to create a world-religion."

And here is a specimen of this new world-religion.

"Ye have heard how in old times it was said, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; but I say unto you, Blessed are the valiant, for they shall make the earth their throne. Ye have heard men say, Blessed are the peacemakers; but I say unto you, Blessed are the warmakers, for they shall be called, if not the children of Jehovah, the children of Odin, who is greater than Jehovah."—*Germany and England*," pp. 113-17.

If this is an accurate representation it helps one to understand the immoral conduct of this war and the precepts of General Bernhardi, the greatest authority in Germany on military tactics. You all know of his famous book.

"France must be so completely crushed that she shall never come in our path again. Treaties are only binding while it is the interest of the State to keep them.

"The State's highest moral duty is to increase its power. The State is the sole judge of the morality of its own action. It is above morality. Whatever is necessary is moral. The blessings of war must be emphasised; courts of arbitration and efforts to abolish war are not only foolish, but immoral."

The awful thing here is the proclaiming of Paganism as a rule of action. It is not only the breaking of treaties and the trampling on weak neighbours. Other nations have done that, knowing it to be wrong. But it is the proclaiming that it is right to do this if the advantage of the State requires it. The ideals of Christ are gone, there is no standard of righteousness.

We have not been so very good ourselves in our past history. We have not been always righteous or just or chivalrous, but we at least knew that we ought to be. The ideals of Christ were there, however we might ignore them. The awful thing is to lose the ideals of Christ.

It is a serious lesson for us all. Protestantism in Germany had no solemn thought of the corporate Church which Christ founded. Religion was a mere matter for individuals to judge as each one thought best. More dan-

gerous was the attitude to Christ Himself. The Eternal Son of God was freely judged and criticised like any other leader of religion. The prevailing tone about Him was rather critical than submissive, more condescending than reverent, marked by a courteous interest rather than by a feeling of awe. The ineffable mystery given to us by Christ was pared down into something easier to understand. For a century past, German criticism has been dealing with Christ merely as a good and holy man. It has criticised Him more freely than it would dare to criticise the Kaiser.

Such a religion had little resistance to offer when the swelling national pride felt that Christianity was too gentle for its dream of world-empire. It helps to explain why the people submitted to the pagan attitude of its leaders.

Let England learn the solemn lesson, to keep enshrined deep in the heart of her faith the Eternal Christ, the image of the invisible God.

IV

But all this starts another perplexity. Why does not Christianity march more rapidly? This taking hold of Christ is so very slow—this enthroning of Christ in human hearts is taking such a very long time.

That is so. And the only escape from that disappointment is *to recognise that it must be*

so. All the great growths, all the eternal growths, are slow. The little annual flower grows up complete in a few weeks, but it dies in a few weeks. The oak tree grows so slowly that year after year it seems not growing at all. But after centuries it is still putting forth its leaves and standing four-square to the winds of heaven.

So with Christianity. Its appeal is for love and generosity and heroism and self-sacrifice. The appeal is made to the dull, selfish heart of humanity. Every step onward depends on the willing surrender of a human heart. Therefore the progress is slow. Jesus told men that it would be slow. He also told them it would be sure. Slowly, irresistibly, with many set-backs, comes in like the tide the Kingdom of God. But it comes in.

Remember that, if you would avoid discouragement. And remember too that the entrance of Christianity into a country and the spread of Christian teaching are only the first stage. It can be done quickly, and it may cause the country to be called Christian. But it is only the opening of the way, the preparing for the greater, deeper, heavier campaign—the enthroning of Christ deep in the hearts of men. That is slow—slow. You must expect it to be.

Do not mistake the first stage for the final. Do not think Christ has failed because He is

not yet enthroned in the soul of humanity. Do not be disappointed because the process is slow.

The eternal moves slowly. This earth was made as a platform on which men should grow towards God. But the platform itself took millions of years in the making, and is so old that it has forgotten its age. What wonder that the spiritual building on it should be slow! It is surely easier to build a world of stones and earth than to build a spiritual order in which the will of a righteous, loving God should be supreme, just as it is easier to build beautiful houses in the slums than to build beautiful souls to live in them.

Men have always been forgetting this and so been disappointed. Some one has said, "1,900 years ago twelve feeble pairs of hands lifted the world and carried it up to God." Not so. They did not. The world is still a long way from God. But it is much nearer than when the twelve apostles took hold. It is nearer to-day than it ever was on any day since Jesus came. It is steadily going on in spite of all set-backs. But it has not yet reached God—not by a long way.

Again, three centuries later we read: "In three centuries it had made the Cross the symbol of authority, it had achieved the impossible; the Galilean had conquered. The Roman Empire was Christian. The emperor was a convert to Christ." And again men

talked of the twelve feeble pairs of hands that had lifted the world and carried it up to God.

Alas no! The Roman Empire was not Christian. This overcoming of outward authority was not the enthroning of Christ in the hearts of the world. It was only a step towards it. It was only a thin veneer of Christianity, and underneath the veneer the pagan heart of the empire was throbbing still. And when at times that pagan heart burst through, men were disappointed, as men are to-day, and talked of the breakdown of Christianity.

If you would escape that disappointment recognise the fact that eternal things grow slowly though surely. The more that individual souls draw near to the Christ the more will they leaven the mass and raise the ideals and ennoble and Christianise public opinion in the nation.

Slowly, steadily we see this happening. Things once regarded as natural and allowable are now regarded as intolerable shame. The butcheries of the arena, the traffic of slavery, the fires of the Inquisition, the titled court harlots in the palace of the king, the hanging of a man for stealing a piece of meat—these are wiped out and can never come back again. Even war, once the proudest national boast, is now come to have to apologise for itself. Future generations will probably look back on our toleration of war as we look back on our ancestors' toleration of the slave trade.

Fear not. The tide is coming in. We are slowly, steadily rising "on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things." The gradual evolution of the national conscience through the power of Christianity is leading to higher notions of God and Right and Duty. Don't be at all pessimistic. Christ is not going to fail. It is in the light of this belief that we can face the doubt and dismay of such crises as the present. That is the morning star in the sky heralding the day.

V

Thus slowly, steadily is Christ lifting up the world to God. Some nations are farther on than others as judged by their standards of right and wrong. I suppose, like men, their age and experience and the discipline of life have something to do with it.

Britain is an old nation; like an old oak tree, disciplined by the blasts of 1,000 years. There was a time when she was capable of doing the evil that Germany is doing to-day. Germany is a young nation, only a century old, and with all the recklessness and conceit and perversity of undisciplined youth. We trust God is more patient with young nations. We trust that by His grace Germany will one day look back with penitent shame on the year 1914 in her history.

England began her Christianity 1,500 years

ago. All down the centuries she has had her saints and martyrs and hosts of humble Christians to leaven her national life. She has not made much of it. But she has made something. She has not talked much of her religion; perhaps she had not too much of it to talk about. But she did things. She has had a passion for liberty and a liking to "play the game," which in religious parlance might well be called a desire for righteousness.

The old motherland can look back over many centuries, over much discipline, over some honest efforts after right, over fierce, determined efforts for freedom and fair play for all. That was her national ideal inwrought by Christianity. Even her kings must play fair. No despot or war-lord should dominate the national conscience. She forced a traitor king to his knees at Runnymede. She sorrowfully sent another king to the block. Her kings must rule rightly. She has waged some wrongful wars, but her greatest battles have been for righteousness and fair play. The Armada of Spain, the tyranny of Louis XIV, and the mad Pirate Empire of Napoleon went down before her for the sake of Europe's liberty. She risked much for right and said little about it, that grim, silent old land.

And when she did wrong, as she often did, she at least knew that it was wrong. Her religion did that at least for her. She never called Wrong Right. For always in the

national vision were the ideals of the Incarnate Christ, however badly she followed them.

God bless her, that old motherland, and make her yet a blessing to the nations! She needs God's blessing. She needs to be brought closer to Christ. She needs purifying. God purify her! Even if it must be through this discipline of pain. Even if it be that only through much tribulation she may wash her robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

VI

If Christianity has broken down, then let us abandon hope. Whatever its seeming defects, whatever its delays, get the conviction down deep in your hearts, that the religion of Jesus is the one and only hope for the world.

There are just two ways, so far as we can see, by which God could stop this war or stop any other evil.

One is by sweeping down in wrath and destroying all offenders from off the face of the earth. That would stop war all right. And stop all other evil too. Do we want God to do that? At any rate He will not.

The other way is to change men's hearts that they will not want to kill each other any more. That is the way God has chosen. So comes the appeal of the Father's love, the appeal of Christ dying on the Cross for them. If that fail there seems no other way. It is that or nothing.

VII

What is the practical conclusion for us to-day? That Christian men should stand by the Christ. That we should examine ourselves. How far am I responsible for this discredit to religion? How far am I responsible for those brave boys lying dead on the battlefields? They will not ask you that. Ask it of yourself. Oh, men and women, get back to Christ,—back to your church and prayer and sacraments. Lift up your family life nearer to the life of God and thus help on the life of your nation.

And on this day of our mission appeal let these sins of nations call us all to do our best to extend the only antidote—the religion of Jesus Christ. Do your best to give it to the heathen. Do your best to make the North-West religious,—that great immigrant crowd, mostly young, mostly men, mostly of our own kith and kin from beyond the sea.

England is proud of Canada's self-sacrifice for the Empire. Let us be proud, too, of Canada's self-sacrifice for Christ. We want to make Canada a religious country. And now is the time while Canada is young.

One day Canada will take her place amongst the great peoples of the earth, and historians will tell how she came amongst the nations. And prominent then, I trust, will be the story of her christening; how the old Fathers of

the Confederation debated on her name. Shall we call her the State or the Colony or the Commonwealth, or what ? How old Sir Leonard Tilly arose in his place. " Gentlemen, I read in my Bible this morning that God's Dominion should be from sea to sea and from the River unto the ends of the earth. From sea to sea, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the River, the St. Lawrence, unto the ends of the earth at the Pole. Let us call her 'The Dominion,' 'God's Dominion.' " And the whole assembly rose enthusiastically to his call and christened her "The Dominion" in the name of the Lord.

May she ever remain true to her sacred title. May her sons guard her faithfully from enemies without and guard her no less faithfully from spiritual enemies within.

" O Canada, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee ! "

ON PLAYING THE MAN

V

ON PLAYING THE MAN

“Quit you like men.”—1 COR. xvi. 13.

I

WE are beginning to-night the monthly sermons arranged by the Men’s Association, and I desire to strike the keynote in this rallying cry of St. Paul. It is a short watchword, only four words even in English, but in the original Greek, as St. Paul wrote it, it consists only of one. One single word, short, sharp, energetic, like the order of a general at the moment of conflict, like the battle-cry of an army charging in war—*Andrizesthe!* Play the man. Be manly. Quit you like men.

I call your attention to this thought. St. Paul is here plainly suggesting that the truest, highest Christianity in men is essentially manly, and it needs special emphasising for you young men. For down deep in the heart of many young men I know there is the vague, unspoken thought that there is something—well, not quite manly in being earnestly

religious. You are quite right in shrinking from anything unmanly. Every true man must do that. You want to be men—not women, not children. Therefore it is healthy for you to feel that this fearless man of Tarsus, who was all his life quietly playing the man, quietly facing prison and danger and death for the sake of Christ and the Right, puts prominent in his ideal of the Christian man that he should be manly. That is the glory of a young man. The glory of an old man is his wisdom, the glory of a child is his innocence, the glory of a woman is her beauty and gentleness. The glory of a young man is his strength, his manliness. If he loses that we despise him. Be men, St. Paul says. Be men. You are the soldiers of the Kingdom of God. Quit you like men.

I want you to think out this thought, that manliness and religion are closely connected. In fact, I do not think it too strong a statement that you cannot have true manliness without religion. The tendency of religion is to make everything the best of its kind. It is not that manliness is superior to womanliness. Everything in its own place. We do not want manly women and we do not want womanly men. True religion tends to make each the best of its kind—to make the child trustful and child-like, to make the old man honourable and reverend, to make the woman a true woman, to make the young man manly.

II

Some of you may cleverly retort : "If this be so, how does the preacher account for what he admits himself, that there is a widespread, unspoken feeling amongst young men that it is not a very manly thing to be religious ? There must be some grounds for this."

That is a fair objection, and I have thought about it. First, I think that with many young men it arises from a low and foolish idea of what manliness is. You know what silly notions there are. The schoolboy of a certain class thinks it a manly thing to do what he sees men doing. Therefore he learns to smoke like a man. As he gets older he thinks it manly to drink, to treat his comrades, to talk lightly about girls, to make light of religion, to refuse to be bound by the wishes of his mother. Most of us would not call these things manly. We should call them by a very different name. I have heard of a conceited young man from across the water who complained to an old Canadian settler that one does not meet gentlemen out here. "Now what exactly do you mean by a gentleman ?" asked the Canadian. "I mean a man of leisure who has time to enjoy life, who has not to be always occupying his mind and soiling his hands with work and trade and shopkeeping." "Well," said the grim old settler, "we have some of them too, but out here we don't call them gentle-

men; we call them loafers." So you see it depends on what you would call manliness. If you have a very low ideal of it you must certainly rule out religion.

I am not sure, too, that we are not influenced by a survival of old prejudices from medieval days. In early ages Christians were persecuted and defenceless and had to practise the only virtues they could, gentleness, patience, resignation, self-sacrifice—those beautiful virtues in which women have ever stood higher than men. As time went on the monastic life, which is not very manly, became more and more identified with religion. Life in convents and monasteries was called the "religious life," as distinguished from the secular life. Shut out from the vigorous, bracing struggles of men, the monks became very womanly, both in their virtues and their vices. Gradually rough, brave men of the world learned to associate this with religion and to talk of religion as something "fit only for women and priests." True there was a splendid recoil from this in the institution of chivalry, when brave, pure knights taught the world that manliness and religion went hand in hand—that to be loyal to God, to be true to the King, to defend the weak, to seek dangerous adventures, to guard the honour of women, were the true ideal of the perfect knight. Still in spite of this there remained a sort of traditional belief of the unmanliness of the religious life.

Perhaps another thing too has rather prejudiced the position. I have known a few good fellows who through God's grace were converted from an evil life and had learned the glory and happiness of living for God, but who used to talk too much, and talk in a goody-goody, sanctimonious way that rather repelled men. It was a great pity, for they were often such earnest good fellows, far better than some of us who criticised them. Christ was very real to them, and they would talk out fearlessly about their religion in a way most of us would not have the courage to do. But somehow, I must confess, they got on one's nerves. They needed more reserve. The fault was not their religion, but their own temperament. A wise Scotsman once gave such men this good advice. "Because you have put off the old man," he said, "it is not necessary that you should put on the old woman."

Such trifles as these do help to prejudice men. But what a shame it should be so! What petty childishness! Here is the Eternal Son of God waiting to lead out his soldiers dedicated in their Baptism. Here is a world to-day full of war and pain and selfishness and sin, and people mocking at the apparent breakdown of Christianity, because Christian men will not stand out boldly for Christ and Righteousness. And because some young fools have low ideals, because some monks of olden

days and some few Christians of our own day do not appear very manly, some of you are willing to forget that the manliest men who ever lived were men who lived nearest to their God,—men like the Baptist, who called adultery by its right name though the adulterer was a king, and lost his head for it; men like Luther, who faced the mightiest powers on earth—“Here I stand, I can do naught else, God help me”; men like General Gordon, whose Bible lay always beside his sword; men like the young college graduates of my young days, the captain of the University cricket team, the stroke oar of the University eight, who reverently came forward to offer their lives to Christ in the mission field of China.

Ay, you forget these and countless like them all over the world. And, men, because you forget them, and because perhaps you yourselves are not manly enough to show your colours and give people a true idea of manly religion, therefore this stigma rests on Christianity and young men are inclined to think of it as something unmanly.

More shame to you who let them think so.

III

So far for false notions about unmanliness in religion. Now I want you to look straight at the ideals of Christianity and judge whether true religion is unmanly or not. Go back to

the beginning. Hear the voice of the Church at Baptism sending out into life the little baby boy : " We do sign him with the sign of the Cross in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant to his life's end." Does not the "tune ring manly"? And all through his life the precepts run on. He is always to "play the man," to "be strong in the Lord," fighting with evil, saying No to temptation, standing at any cost by the right and true, ruling and mastering the evil self within. And he is to look to God for help in the contest. "Fear not," saith God, "I am with thee, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee." How does that strike you as a man's ideal?

And now to carry the war into the enemy's country. How does it compare with some lives that you know? When instead of the question, What is the right thing, what would God have me do? men ask, What would my companions think if I did it? When a man slavishly follows his besetting sin. When he is afraid of being laughed at for doing right. When he would rather risk bringing pain to his mother's heart than risk the sneer of evil companions. When a man, with good impulses himself, has not the courage to rebuke conduct which he hates, or to stand up boldly for an

innocent young comrade who is being tempted. I have seen these things, till I am sick of them, with fellows who call themselves men.

Or when a man goes on rebelling against God, because he is not going to die to-day or to-morrow, with the contemptible under-thought back somewhere in his mind that before he dies some day he will repent and cry to the Almighty, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I don't want to stand with such men here or hereafter. I would rather take my chance with that dying infidel of whom I have somewhere read. For years he had been preaching his own conviction against religious belief and had led many astray. When he was dying came the thought of his mother and the dear old faith he had learned at her knee. "I have been wrong all these years," he said, "and now I am dying and cannot undo the wrong." "If you think that," said his friend, "send for a clergyman and make your peace with the God you have fought against." The dying sinner drew himself up and answered with a proud, indignant look "No," he said; "no such low-down thing as that for me. After defying God all my life as long as I was able I will not be mean enough to come whining to Him now because I can defy Him no longer. No, I will take my chance." So he died.

It was an awful death. But I cannot help having some sympathy with him. And I am

not afraid to say in a Christian pulpit to-night, I would rather take my chance with him before the merciful Father than with some of those sneaking creatures that I have referred to.

And these are the manly fellows that some of you young men set up for your models, for whose approval some of you would break the heart of the mother that bore you.

My brethren, be sure of this—that St. Paul was right, that true religion and true manliness are closely connected, that the finest type of man on this earth is the soldier of Christ who does not talk but acts, who begins and closes his day in touch with God and goes out into his life to make the world better by a noble life and a work well done.

IV

Now for some practical suggestions in conclusion.

(1) First this. The primary duty of your young Christian manhood to-day is to offer itself for active service in this war for defence of your nation and empire. Some of your comrades are already gone. We are following them with our prayers. Go after them if you are free to go. Some of you are not free to go. But be honest about that. Let no laziness or cowardice settle it for you. Your country is out on one of the noblest expeditions of her

history, fighting for the freedom of Europe, for the defence of weak nations, for the honour of her plighted word—nay, I might almost say for the defence of our holy Faith. For this is no ordinary war. It is a war of great principles, of Might against Right, of low ideals against high, almost of Paganism against Christianity. I hate to say this of any great people, but I have been studying the question as deeply as I could and I fear that the paganism of the wild German tribes of old is breaking forth again in the lives of their descendants. If we are to judge by their acts and by the utterances of their most popular teachers the old pagan spirit is breaking through their veneer of Christianity and Germany is tearing up the Sermon on the Mount.

I don't know what has possessed this fine people so to be led astray. They are a young nation, and God is very patient with young nations. Some day, please God, they will come right again. But, as things stand to-day, if they win this fight and become the lords of Europe, religion and civilisation will be set back indefinitely.

Nay, even England herself may be in danger in spite of all our optimism. You can never tell how the whole position may be altered in a few months for one side or the other. You do not want another Belgium for the women and children of the motherland. And it is the last men out that will make the difference.

Go out to prevent it. Be worthy of those who went before you and leave to your children the richest of all inheritances, the memory of fathers who in a great cause put self-sacrifice above ease, above honour, above life itself.

Self-sacrifice ! That is the central ideal of our holy religion. And, thank God, we hold it up before us as the central ideal of our nation too. Our national flag is emblazoned with the symbol of self-sacrifice, the symbol of the Cross. And our national ideal "follows the flag," however we may fail in acting up to it. For you know that is the ideal of the best amongst us which was expressed long ago by Sir Henry Gilbert, who founded the first Canadian colony. "That man is not worthy to live at all who for fear or danger shunneth his country's service."

It is this high note which ennobles British history to-day. It is this which makes the old motherland proud of her sons :

"Mother, with unbowed head
Hear thou across the sea
The farewell of thy dead,
The dead who died for thee.
Greet them again with tender words and grave
For, saving thee, themselves they could not save."

I never thought, with my deep horror of war, that I should one day stand in this pulpit to send men of my parish out to fight. I am proud of our Men's Association ; some of them are gone. I am proud of our fine men's choir ;

some of them too are gone. But I would gladly see the choir cut down to a few boys, I would gladly see the whole Men's Association disappear, if I could feel that they had gone out at the call of Duty. God guide you men to decide aright.

(2) And this is the next thing. Whether you decide to go or stay, show your colours. Let men see that you are on the side of Christ. You talk of certain men, who, by their sentimental, goody-goody talk, make manly men a bit disgusted with religion. Well, what is the remedy? Surely that men who think themselves more manly should stand out openly on the side of their Lord. If people can hardly tell whether you are on Christ's side or not, they must still judge Christianity by the men that they know. I believe there are believers who hate all cant and effusive talk,—men honestly battling with temptation and really trying to do the will of God, but who are ashamed to show any enthusiasm for God, ashamed to speak to a comrade about religion, ashamed to rebuke vice in a companion, ashamed to say grace at meat as if really meaning it, ashamed to come to the table of the Lord, ashamed even to answer the responses in church.

Soldiers of Christ ashamed to walk under His banner! Brethren, get back to that brave Baptismal vow not to be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, to fight manfully

under His banner, to continue His soldier and servant to your lives' end.

And there are women also in church to-night. Have they any concern with this matter? Aye, have they! Let my last words be to them. Women have much to do in forming men's ideals. Men are keenly sensitive to a woman's attitude. If you show to lover and husband and brother and friend that your ideal of manhood is pure and high, a manhood of courage and purity and self-restraint, of daring to stand out for the Right at any cost; if you refuse to tolerate in your company the coward, the impure, the man living idly for himself; if you treat with scorn the ideals that so often prevail—then you will do more than all the preachers to lift the standards of men and to remove the stigma of unmanliness from the religion of Christ.

VI

THE BOY WORLD

A SERMON TO BOY SCOUTS

“The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.”—ZECH. viii. 5.

I

THERE are 250 Boy Scouts in church to-day, and I am asked to preach a sermon to boys. Do you know, boys, it is not so easy to preach a sermon to you. For your boy world is so different from our men's world. Our world, with its new inventions and discoveries, changes greatly with the years. That queer world of yours remains just the same since the boys of the early world played round the Tower of Babel. I have a photograph of a boy's copybook out of an Egyptian tomb of Moses' time, and on the back of the leaf is the picture of a man with round head and dots for eyes and hands sticking out like five-pronged rakes. That is schoolboy “fine art” for 4,000 years past. You have never improved on that. I saw the very same on the

back of a boy's copybook in the High School the other day.

We remember your world all right, and some of us had a very good time there. It was a happy world. It had its troubles, its hard school lessons, and its punishments sometimes; but we had the power then that we have a good deal lost since—the power of easily forgetting painful things and of thoroughly enjoying pleasant things. Don't you be in too great a hurry to leave that world of boyhood.

Since we left your world and its gates closed behind us we have more than once wished ourselves back. Do you notice how pathetically some of us seem all the time trying to get back?—how we play at games with balls and golf sticks and fishing rods and cricket bats, trying to make believe that we are boys still?

Ah, but it does not work. It is not the same thing. The glory is gone out of it. The romance is gone out of it. The old enchanted land is closed, and we can but look back over the walls with memories of the beautiful old days when the world was young, when we were giants and heroes and soldiers and robbers. I remember at your age I was second in command of a fierce robber band that infested the woods and made fires in a big cave. Those were great days.

Our men's world has its happy times too. But it is not like the old times—the old boy-

hood days are gone, never to come back until we start afresh in the eternal youth of the great new world within the veil.

II

But perhaps we older people are more in sympathy with you than you know. You think we are outsiders and meddlers—always saying “DON’T!” because we don’t understand the laws of your boy world. But remember we know both the boy world and the man world, and you only know one of them. Therefore our experience can tell you some things that are good for you to know. We can tell you that in our world, as in yours, happiness comes from obeying your three Scout laws :

To do your duty to God and the King.

To help other people at all times.

To obey those set over you.

We can tell you what every good soldier at the front to-day would tell you, the nobleness of things learned in your drill and in your sports. That to stand up and play the game when your shins are hacked on the football field and the other side seems winning is the training for playing the game nobly in your manhood by-and-by; that to do your duty when you don’t like doing it, to sacrifice yourself for others in the little things of boyhood ;—

that these are God's training for the big field of manhood, the training that is telling in the battlefields to-day.

We can tell you what we have learned ourselves: that the boy makes the man; that the pure, brave, high-minded boy will be the pure, brave, high-minded man; that the impure, mean, cowardly boy will be the impure, mean, cowardly man.

The boy makes the man.

God only makes the BABIES—He lets the boy make the man—by His help.

You have had noble men in your boy world. All the noble men of all the ages have been in it. Moses and Joshua, and Gideon and David, and Jonathan and St. Paul and John the Baptist, and King Alfred and Richard of the Lion Heart, and the great Crusaders, and Raleigh and Drake, and Clive and Livingstone, and Wellington and Lord Roberts, and French and Kitchener, and your own hero Baden Powell. But all the noble men had in the main been noble boys first—brave and true and tender and chivalrous—training for a great future.

III

And among all the boys of the old world there was one Boy above all—the Boy who has consecrated all boyhood for ever—Jesus, the Nazareth boy in the carpenter's home. Is

it not lovely to think that God came to earth as a boy, that He knows and sympathises with boys more than any of us can? He was a boy Himself,—a poor boy. He played in the streets with the other boys. Long afterwards He looked back into the old boy life and told of the children playing with Him in the market place crying to each other, “We have piped unto you and ye have not danced,” etc.

Oh, I wish some one had made us a story of His boy life with the games he played and the expeditions with his comrades. I think this poor world with all its carelessness would gladly give 100 millions of dollars to-day for a true story of that boyhood.

We have some old legends. One day they say He was at the village pool with the other boys, making clay pigeons, and that he threw His pigeons into the air and made them fly. One day a group of Nazareth boys in the woods came upon a little dead dog lying in the sunshine. “What an ugly little beast!” they said. “Oh,” said the boy Jesus, “what lovely white teeth, bright like ivory!” I don’t know where that story came from, but I think it was just like the Jesus of later life, who would always look for the one little bit of good in a man in the midst of his evil.

The poet Longfellow has a picture of the Nazareth village school and the old rabbi calling the boys :

“Come hither, Judas Iscariot,
Say if thy lesson thou hast got
From the Rabbinical book or not.
Now, little Jesus, the carpenter’s son,
Let me see how thy task is done,” etc.

But we have no trustworthy account of that boyhood till the Bible touches the story and shows Him at twelve years old at the Feast of the Passover, looking at the slain lamb which told of a great deliverance in the past—ay, and told of a greater deliverance in the future, when that little Boy should lay down His life for men: the “Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.”

I wonder how much He understood of it then. But I think there was a purpose in giving this one glimpse of His boyhood looking out into the glorious life of self-sacrifice for men. It says, “Jesus went down with His parents and was subject to them. Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.”

IV

My lads, you are pledged in your baptism to follow Him, to be “Christ’s soldiers and servants to your lives’ end.”

To be Christ’s soldiers. How are you to do it? There is one way which every boy would rise to.

You are all wishing to-day that you were ten years older to go out with the Canadian con-

tingent to the war. If the King called for 1,000 boys in Canada to march out against the men that threaten the liberties of Europe you would all offer. If the Church called for a boy army to win back the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, that would just suit you. Do you know that boys attempted it once?

About 700 years ago, in the year 1212, there was a most romantic and wonderful movement in France and Germany. There was a cry from the oppressed pilgrims visiting the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem for help against the cruel Saracens. The old warriors had got tired of Crusades and would not go. Then the boys rose in wild enthusiasm, and some of the girls too. They assembled 50,000 strong, with the red cross upon their shoulders, to go out to deliver the Holy Sepulchre. It was the most wonderful scene in all history. Neither parents nor rulers could stem the tide. They **WOULD** go. They **MUST** go to fight for Christ. So the great boys' army started with prayers and hymns, and all the bright summer days they marched and the people of the towns met them in crowds with provisions. The world seemed going wild with eagerness to fight for Jesus. Wise men called the lads fools and lunatics. But I think the Lord Jesus, who understood boys, saw something very beautiful in it, in spite of its so-called foolishness.

Of course it failed. The pouring rain and the cold nights on the hill-side and the scarcity

of food killed off many of the young warriors, and some were drowned in crossing the rivers, and some were seized by the pirates of Algiers and carried into slavery. The expedition of course was a failure. But it was a glorious failure. It was madness. But it was splendid madness—the madness of boys who felt Jesus near, and cared not for pain or death if they could fight for Him. I can fancy Him looking down with loving sympathy when the sensible people called them fools and mad. “Ah,” He would say, “I understand them. They are boys. I was a boy myself, and none can rise to such heights of high romantic devotion as boys can.”

My lads, He is looking down on you to-day. And he wants a Boys’ Crusade to-day. But it is harder and less romantic work to which He calls you. To fight His enemies. To fight with temper and impurity—to help your comrades to do right, to be chivalrous as the knights of old to women and girls, to “stand up and play the game,” when the game seems going against you. The Boys’ Crusade is as real as ever, but the hardest part of it is in your private lives. By your baptismal vows you are all enlisted in a spiritual war in which you must fight to a finish—a war harder, perhaps, to win than even the war now raging in Europe. For, after all, it is the moral victory which it is so hard to win. The epitaph on the old soldier’s tombstone is still true :

“Here lies an old soldier whom all must applaud ;
He fought many battles at home and abroad ;
But the hottest engagement he ever was in
Was the conquest of self in the battle with sin.”

V

Shall I tell you of a young Crusader of your own day ? * The first scene is a military camp out on the plains in central England. The white tents dotted over the field and soldiers in many uniforms are moving around. A bright, handsome boy is talking to his great friend, an old Irish sergeant. “Look here, O’Reilly, you know I am going to be a soldier too when I grow up ; you know all our family were soldiers—uncle and grandfather and great-grandfather and everybody, and I’m going to be a soldier. I’m going to fight all the enemies of England.” He was a brave boy, and his mother was so proud of him. She was a soldier’s daughter, and came of a long line of soldiers, and she looked forward to the lad being a great leader some day.

The next scene is three months after. It is a great day at camp. The General has come down and arranged for a grand review. I see young Leonard on the box seat of his father’s carriage holding his black dog Sweep in his arms. He is intensely excited as he watches the march past. The red-coated infantry, the

* Mrs. Ewing, *Story of a Short Life*.

green Irish rifles, the dashing Gordon Highlanders with the bagpipes playing. Then a squadron of lancers, and last of all the great heavy artillery with the guns. Leonard springs to his feet with the dog in his arms on the high seat and cheers wildly as the artillery pass. Suddenly there is a cry of horror. The boy has fallen from his place right in front of the guns. There is an instant halt. But it is too late. A great artillery horse has stepped upon his spine, and the doctor pronounces that he is crippled for life.

Oh, God help that poor mother! Now, I see her kneeling in his room crying and praying for her boy. She is troubled deeply about him. Not merely that all her hopes are dashed—that her boy can never be a soldier now. There is a deeper trouble. She has petted and spoiled him. He has not learned to control his desires or his fierce temper. She hears him now shouting angrily at his nurse, and at last she hears the woman crying. He has struck her with his crutch.

And the poor lady thinks sorrowfully of the higher soldiering which her boy has not learned—to fight his own temper and passions. And now she is kneeling beside him in the dusk and talking to him of Jesus and the real life battle, and the noble little boy's heart within him responds, "Mother, I'll try."

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I pass over twelve weary months of pain and depression while the brave little lad has been trying to do the right. He loves to be wheeled into camp by his Irish friend O'Reilly, and he loves the church parades in the iron church, and he specially enjoys being there when they give out Hymn 439, "The Son of God goes forth to war." They call it the Tug-of-War Hymn because the organist insists that it shall be sung in correct time, and the 900 soldiers are always rushing it when they get excited and lugging it away from him and the choir. He has a very great friend, a young officer known as "the V.C." because he has won the Victoria Cross, and though the boy is so shy with others he talks to him of his little fight that is so hard for him and wonders if he could ever do anything like the winner of the Victoria Cross. And the soldier as he listens is touched to the very heart.

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A year has passed. The camp is out again. It is a Sunday morning and the soldiers are parading for church. But Leonard is not there. Away across the barrack yard is the little window of the room where the brave lad is dying. The V.C. is crossing the parade ground when Sergeant O'Reilly salutes. "Sir, the lad is dying—he can't live out the day; and he asks that the men should sing the Tug-of-War Hymn in church—and he wants you,

sir, to stand at the side door and sing towards his window."

By and by the hymn is started, and the V.C. stands at the door singing, with his eyes on the window across the square.

"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar!
Who follows in His train ?

"Who best can drink the cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who——"

He stops suddenly as if he were shot. The little white blind across the square has come sharply down. The brave little soldier is gone into the presence of his Chief away in the Eternal City, where the boys and girls are playing in the streets thereof. Ay, and working too in the big, glad, unselfish service within the veil. For the boys who are "Christ's faithful soldiers and servants" here shall continue that service in joyous, untiring youth in the great land beyond.

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE

1—DEATH AND AFTER

VII

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE

I—DEATH AND AFTER

I

TO most people looking out upon the world-tragedy of to-day, the most painful and perplexing thought seems to be the appalling waste of human life, the thousands and thousands of splendid fellows in the prime of their young manhood, with the high promise of their future unrealised, cut off in a moment. Even to outsiders it is an appalling thought, What must it be to the friends who loved them, to the mothers who are breaking their hearts all over Europe to-day?

The awful waste of it!—all the loving thought over their childhood, all the care, the anxiety, the effort, the earnest prayers that God would make them good and noble men; all the hopes and pride in the high promise that they showed! Waste! Waste! The lads are dead. All that they might have been and done in the world is lost. The kindly,

sympathetic friends have little comfort to offer. "He has died in a noble cause. Time will bring blessed easing to the agony of to-day. We must bow in resignation under the mysterious will of God." Ah, it is poor comfort. It does not help the mother's pain or the perplexity of men about the fine young lives wasted.

"Console if you will—we can bear it,
 'Tis a kindly wasting of breath;
 But not all the talking since Adam
 Can make death to be other than death."

II

What is the message of the Church of Christ in this matter? Has she any word from her Master to the world to "make death to be other than death?" Aye, has she! Listen to it. That there is no death. That what seems to us death is only birth into a larger, fuller life, with nobler opportunities, with more developed powers. That as the baby's eyes open from the darkness of the womb to sunlight upon this earth, so will the eyes that close in the darkness of death open on "a light that never was on sea or land."

How can I put before you in the short limits of a sermon the message of our holy religion about "the men who died in battle"? You must think hard. You must follow me closely.

First, concentrate your attention on the

self within you—the mysterious, spiritual being that you call “I”—that real self which stands behind the body looking out at me now through the windows of your eyes, receiving messages through the portals of your ears; which is not the body, but owns and uses the body; which is not the brain, but works through the brain, its instrument; which is not the train of thoughts and feelings and emotions, but experiences these thoughts and feelings and emotions.

Realise that this mysterious spiritual “I” within is the real man himself—that the body is only his outward garment, continually being woven by him out of certain chemical substances. That this body is continually changing its substance like the rainbow in the sky or the eddy in the river. That the body you have to-day is no more the body of five years ago than the fire on your hearth to-night is the same that was there this morning. I have had a dozen different bodies since I was born. I am all the time laying them aside like the old clothes that I have done with. But “I” am the same still.

Realise that my brain is only the instrument played on by “me,” who stand behind it. That the particles of my brain are always changing. That I have had a dozen brains since I was born, so far as its material particles are concerned. Yet memory insists that I am still the same “I” in spite of all these

changes of brain, and I can remember what I said and did with those old vanished brains of mine twenty and thirty years ago.

Realise that "I" am not the thoughts and feelings and emotions. They are mine. They are not I. They are only passing phases of my being. They are always changing. Everything around is changing. I remain the same being always. Nothing else in the universe remains the same—except God. God and "I."

Realise especially the continuity of personal identity in this "I," this self within, in spite of all bodily changes. Not a particle remains of the brain or nerves or tongue or eyes or hands or feet with which "I" did a good or evil deed twenty years ago, but it is absolutely impossible for me to doubt that it was "I" who did it, that "I" to-day deserve the praise or blame which is due to it.

III

Now, have I helped you even a little to think of this mysterious, supernatural, personal self and to think of it apart from the perishable body, apart from the brain and heart and eye and tongue: the instruments which it uses? For, if so, you will see better what the Bible means by a man's soul as distinguished from his body. You will see better that this self which you call "I" is the real man, the man in the centre of his being, the man as he lives

beneath the eye of God and enters into relations with God—the man for whom the Bible announces that exciting adventure in the long ages of the Hereafter. And as you think how he has survived the putting away of every part of the body a dozen times over, you find it easier to understand the revelation of Christ that he will survive the final putting away of the whole body at death.

Now call up before you the dead face of your friend on the battle-field, and then grip with both hands the fact that this life as he knew it is but one stage in God's progressive life-plan for him. And not the first stage either. Already he has had his pre-natal life, "where the bones did grow in the womb of her that was with child." That was his first life. From that dull, lower existence he passed through a great crisis into the higher life of earth with its new educative experiences. That, too, was but a preparatory stage, the kindergarten stage, the caterpillar stage, of his career. And what we call death, the end of this earth career, is revealed to us in Scripture as birth into a new and more exciting career stretching away into the far future, age after age, æon after æon, whose prospect should stir the very blood within us. God only knows how many stages there are still before we reach "unto the stature of the full-grown man, even unto the stature of the fulness of Christ."

There is nothing which so touches some of us as a thing with "makings" in it, a thing with untold potentialities in it, a thing which may come in the future to God alone knows what. Talk of the caterpillar which is to develop into the butterfly, or the acorn which shall one day be a mighty oak! Why, these miracles are but child's play compared with the miracles potentially wrapped up in this mysterious self. No wildest fairy-tale can suggest the wonder of man's possibilities as he passes out into the new adventure of the life beyond.

IV

Death is the appointed gateway into that life beyond—the only way in. And we are horribly afraid of it. I suppose it is only natural that we should shrink from being launched against our will into the Unknown. I suppose, if we had had intelligence enough to think about it, we should have been equally afraid of being launched, at the crisis of birth, into this unknown world where we are now.

And yet, ought we to be so afraid of death? Has not Christ revealed to us that this terrible thing that we so fear for him who is gone really only means that at the close of this poor limited kindergarten stage of his history Death has come—God's beneficent angel—to lead him into the next stage of being. Why

should we be afraid? Birth gave him much, death will give much more. FOR DEATH MEANS BIRTH INTO A FULLER LIFE. What a fright he gives us, this good angel of God! We do not trust his Master much.

Do you say that you do not know what is before your friend—that it is a “leap off into the dark”? Have we not learned from Scripture that it is much less of “dark” than some of us thought? And may it not be much less of a “leap off” than we think—only a closing of the eyes here and an opening of them there? May not the birth into that life be as simple as the birth into this? May not our fright be like that of Don Quixote when blindfolded he hung by his wrist from the stable window and they told him that a tremendous abyss yawned beneath him? He is in terror of the awful fall. Maritornes cuts the thong with gladsome laughter, and the gallant gentleman falls—just four inches! May we not believe that God reserves just as blithesome a surprise for us when our time comes to discover the simplicity, the agreeableness, the absence of any serious change in what we call dying?

We have all noticed that expression of composed calm which comes on the faces of the newly dead. Some say it is due to muscular relaxation. Perhaps so. But perhaps not. One likes to think it may be something more. Who knows that it may not be

a last message of content and acquiescence from those departing souls who at the moment of departure know perhaps a little more than ourselves — a message of good cheer and pleasant promise by no means to be disregarded ?

V

Let us now see what glimpses the Bible gives us through the mysterious gateway of death, where our departed one has gone on his mysterious journey into the strange new land. From the nature of the case we must not expect much. In the first place, in our present imperfect, limited condition, with senses fitted only for this poor earthly life, it would probably be impossible to teach us much about the higher life of the spirit world. How can you teach a blind, deaf man about this world of beautiful sights and sounds in which you are living ? How could God teach us definite details about a life which no experience of ours can help us to imagine ? And, besides that, Scripture is intended to guide our conduct in this world, not to gratify our speculations about another world. Yet there is more revealed than people think.

First, watch our Lord draw the curtain a little in His story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The "story," I say, not the

“parable.” It is no parable. A parable is the statement of an analogy between visible things and invisible. This is a direct statement about the invisible things themselves. Jesus is telling what happens after death.

Their friends had followed these men to the grave, and could go no farther. Jesus follows them in thought into the life beyond the gateway. His story is not at all intended as a revelation of that life. It is simply a passing reference to it in warning against selfishness. But it lifts the curtain a little bit. Clearly He is speaking not of the far hereafter, but of the unseen life of to-day, running on side by side with this earthly life. For you see the men referred to are not long dead. Dives’ brothers are still living here. Dives is quite conscious that the ordinary life of men on earth is still going on. Jesus is telling of the life in which our departed ones are living to-day. And, though His purpose be not any definite teaching about it, yet surely He would not misrepresent it.

First, then, I notice that that life in its inmost experiences seems very like this life, and follows from it quite naturally. He depicts it as a clear, conscious life. They are not dead nor asleep nor unconscious. They are very much alive. He represents them as thinking and speaking and feeling. Lazarus is feeling “comforted.” Dives is feeling “tormented,” and is thinking keenly of his own

misery and of his brothers' danger on earth at that moment. So actively alive are they all to him that he wants one of them to go back to earth to tell his brothers about it.

Next I learn that each feels himself the same continuous "I" that he was on earth. Lazarus feels himself the same Lazarus, Dives feels himself the same Dives, the brother of those five boys.

Then I read on Christ's authority that there is no break in memory. Of course there could not be if I am still "I." But our Lord confirms this. Lazarus remembers Dives. Dives remembers Lazarus so well that he wants him to go back to convert his brothers. Ay, he remembers the brothers in the old Jerusalem home, the five boys that grew up beside him. He remembers sorrowfully that they have grown to be selfish men like himself, perhaps through his fault. He is thinking about them and troubling about them. And Abraham assumes this memory as a matter of course. "My son, remember that thou in thy lifetime . . ."

I read on, "Now he is comforted and thou art tormented." That again is just what I should expect. It is all quite natural. If "I" am still the same "I" in full, vivid, conscious life, in full memory of the past—if I have passed out of the mists of earth into the full light of the Eternal, where everything is seen at its full value, where money counts

for nothing and love counts for everything, it is of course natural that the good man should feel comforted and the bad man should be tormented.

In the expression "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" I think we have our Lord's indication that the poor soul does not go out solitary into a great lone land. Perhaps we have a suggestion also that Dives was the better for the discipline of that new life. Instead of the selfishness of his life on earth, we have now, amid all his own trouble, anxiety for the welfare of his five brothers on earth. But I am not concerned here with that. I am looking only for indications of a conscious life beyond death's gateway.

We get another glimpse of that life in the story of the Transfiguration, when Moses and Elias come out from that life to meet the Lord and to speak with Him "of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 31). Does it not suggest at once the deep interest which they and their comrades, the great souls within the Veil, were taking in the mighty scheme of Redemption that was being worked out on earth? Does it not suggest that those in the spirit land are watching our doings here? Does it not help us to anticipate the joy in that wondrous life when, straight from the Cross, Christ the triumphant victor "descended into Hades"

(Apostles' Creed) to proclaim the glad news to the dead (1 Peter iv. 18); to unfurl His banner and set up His cross in the great world of the departed ?

Our next hint comes when the Lord is dying on the cross. The penitent thief is hanging beside him. Death is drawing near. The poor sinner is about to take the leap off into the dark. He does not know what is before him : darkness — unconsciousness — nothingness—what ? He does not know. The only one on earth who does know is on a cross beside him. "LORD, REMEMBER ME WHEN THOU COMEST INTO THY KINGDOM." And Jesus said : "TO-DAY THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE." Not in Heaven, but in Paradise—the Jews' word for the resting-place of good men after death. Now, when one man says to another at such a time, "To-day you shall be with me," surely it suggests "To-night, when our dead bodies are hanging on the cross, you and I will be living a full, conscious life, and you will remember our acquaintance here upon the earth ; we shall know each other as the two who hung together this morning on Calvary."

Only three hours later the Lord passed in Himself into that Unseen Land where the poor thief had gone before Him. "Put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit," St. Peter tells us, He went in to proclaim good

tidings to them that were dead (1 Peter iv. 18). Surely these must have been alive and conscious. This journey of Jesus was a most prominent teaching in the early Church and has been embodied as an article of the Christian faith: "He descended into Hades."

I am not discussing any of those questions here. I am but offering you a few hints from Scripture that "the men who died in battle" have only moved on into a new stage of conscious life and adventure.

VI

In the next chapter I mean to follow out more fully the teaching of Scripture as to the life beyond death's dark gateway. I shall try to distinguish between those who have died in Christ's faith and fear and those of whom we dare not speak with any such confidence.

To-day I confine myself to the common thought that the young soldier who fell last week on the battle-field is dead, his career ended, his high promise unrealised, his life wasted. That is the origin of the heathenish symbol in our Mount Royal Cemetery, a broken pillar on a young man's grave to indicate a life broken off incomplete. It is false! It is heathenish!

Nay, brethren, the brave young life that you loved on earth is not ended, but moved on to

develop in other and nobler ways. I am not speaking lightly of this. My own eldest boy is gone out into that life, and it never occurs to me to think of his life as ended, or to leave him out of my thoughts or prayers any more than when he was here. Keep your boy always in your thoughts and prayers.

“He is not dead, the child of your affection,
But gone into that school
Where he no longer needs your poor protection,
And Christ Himself doth rule.”

Think of your boy as serving at one side of the veil, and you at the other—each in the presence of Christ. Think how he is being lovingly trained and disciplined; how all his abilities are being used in self-sacrificing deeds for others. Not in a glorified selfishness, in thanking God that he is safe, though his brethren be lost. Ah no! but in perfect self-sacrifice, even as his Lord. Think of him as learning to fight for righteousness, to help the weak, ay, mayhap, to go out—God’s brave young knight—into the darkness after some one who has missed Christ on earth. Realise that, and your whole life must perforce grow nobler. And realise that you will not have to wait for the Resurrection or the Advent to meet him and learn all.

When your death comes he will be waiting for you. He has been praying and watching over you. He will tell you of all that has

been happening. And together in Christ's loving presence you will work and wait and help your brethren and look forward to the Heaven that is still in the future.

Thank God for the blessed doctrine of the Paradise Life and for all His poor penitent servants departed this life in His faith and fear.

VII

The news has just come in of the death of England's greatest soldier. Dead on the battle-field, though not in actual battle. A great soldier of England. A humble soldier of Jesus Christ. For threescore years in many lands his sword has upheld the honour of the Empire. A few years ago he sent his soldier son to die for the old land. And now he has gone through to join his boy. To him has come the call to higher duty, perhaps as a soldier still. When I read St. John's vision of "the warrior on the white horse whose name is Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth make war, and the armies of heaven followed Him in white robes," I think soldiering of some kind will be in fashion even there.

While all England is mourning our hero to-day, he has gone through into a larger life. And he carries with him all the high qualities he has won through sixty years of soldiering; all the treasures of disciplined powers, of

enlarged capacity of a brave and loving heart ;
all the ennobling of character which has come
through the struggle after right and duty.
Think you God will not use these in the land
of the Hereafter ? Nay,

“ We doubt not that for one so true
God will have other nobler work to do.
Surely for him high service waits though earth’s last fight
is fought :
God did not give that martial soul to end at last in naught ;
That steadfast soldier heart was not for this brief life alone :
’Tis as a soldier he will stand before the Great White Throne.”

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE
II—THE LIFE BEYOND

VIII

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE

II—THE LIFE BEYOND

I

WE have been trying to study the meaning of death, trying with dim eyes to peer through its dark gateway. But we must not delay at death. Death is a very small thing in comparison with what comes after it—that wonderful, wonderful, wonderful world into which death ushers us. Turn away from the face of your dead. Turn away from the house of clay which held him an hour ago. The house is empty, the tenant is gone. He is away already, gasping in the unutterable wonder of the new experience.

“O change ! stupendous change !
There lies the soulless clod.
The light eternal breaks,
The new immortal wakes,
Wakes with his God !”

Oh, the wonder of it to him at first ! Years ago I met with a story in a sermon by Canon

Liddon. An old Indian officer was telling of his battles—of the Indian Mutiny, of the most striking events in his professional career ; and as he vividly described the skirmishes and, battles and sieges and hair-breadth escapes, his audience hung breathless in sympathy and excitement. At last he paused ; and to their expressions of wonderment he quietly replied, “ I expect to see something much more wonderful than that.” As he was over seventy, and retired from the service, his listeners looked up into his face with surprise. There was a pause ; and then he said, in a solemn undertone, “ I mean in the first five minutes after death.”

That story caught on to me instantly. That has been for years my closest feeling. I feel it at every deathbed as the soul passes through. I believe it will be my strongest feeling when my own death-hour comes—eager, intense, glad curiosity about the new, strange world opening before me.

II

As soon as we try to peer further into the vista beyond we are up against a difficulty. Our thoughts must be confused unless at starting we make a clear distinction between :—

(i) Those who have died in the fear and love of God ; and

(ii) Those for whom we are afraid.

Here we shall assume that our departed one died in Christ's faith and fear. Later we shall think of the others.

Also for further clearness let me here point out WHAT SORT OF KNOWLEDGE WE CAN HAVE AND WHAT SORT OF KNOWLEDGE WE CANNOT HAVE about that life. It may help you not to expect the impossible.

You desire to know two things about the Unseen World.

First—You desire to know the real life of the "I" himself—consciousness, thought, memory, love, happiness, penitence, and such-like.

Secondly—You desire to know his outward surroundings, so as to picture to yourself his life in that world. That is what gives the interesting touch to your knowledge of your friend's life in a foreign land on earth.

Now the first of these is the really important knowledge, and SUCH KNOWLEDGE YOU CAN HAVE and you can understand because it is of the same kind as the knowledge you already have of him on earth. If you are told of full consciousness there, of memory there, of love or hatred there, of happiness or pain there, of joy or sorrow there, you can easily understand it. You have had experience of the like here.

But the second—the knowledge of the outward environment there—what we shall be like, how that world will appear, how we shall

live and move and have our being in a spiritual existence—all that deeply interesting knowledge which imagination could use to picture that life and bring it before us—THAT WE CANNOT HAVE. It is not possible, with our limited faculties and limited experience. We could not be taught it. We have no faculties to take it in hand, no experience to aid us in realising it. A blind man cannot picture colours to himself, a deaf man cannot imagine music. It is not that we are unwilling to teach him, but that his limited faculties prevent him from taking in the idea. Imagine yourself trying to tell a blind, deaf man about the lovely sunset or the music of the birds. We, shut up in these human bodies, are the blind, deaf men in God's glorious universe. Some of our comrades have moved into the new life beyond, where the eyes of the blind are opened and the ears of the deaf are unstopped. But we have no power of even imagining what their wondrous experience is like.

I suppose that is the reason why we have no description of Paradise or Heaven except in earthly imagery of golden streets and gates of pearl. I suppose that is why St. Paul could not utter what he saw when in some trance condition he was caught up into Paradise. I suppose, too, that was why Lazarus could tell nothing of his marvellous four days in the Unseen.

Be content, then, with what you can know.

Don't cry for the moon. Follow your departed in thought and realise what Scripture teaches you about him.

III

What does it teach you ?

First that IT IS A VIVID, CONSCIOUS life into which he has gone.

There are some passages in Scripture which speak of death as sleep, and which taken alone might suggest a long unconsciousness, a sort of Rip Van Winkle life, sleeping for thousands of years and waking up in a moment at the Judgment Day, feeling as if there had been no interval between. But a little thought will show it is a mere figure of speech taken from the sleeping appearance of the body. "The sleep of death" is a very natural expression to use as one looks on the calm, peaceful face after life's fitful fever and the long pain and sickness of the death-bed. But no one can study the Bible references to the life beyond without seeing that it cannot be a life of sleep or unconsciousness. "Shall we sleep between death and the judgment ?" asks Tertullian ; "why, souls do not sleep even when men are alive. It is the province of bodies to sleep." This sleep theory has always been condemned whenever the Church has pronounced on it. Even the Reformers declare it at variance with Holy Scripture,

in spite of the strong feeling in its favour in their day.*

You who have followed thus far need no proof as to the teaching of Scripture that the Waiting Life before the Judgment into which your dear ones have gone is no unconscious sleep, but a real, vivid, conscious life. So vivid that our Lord's Spirit is said to have been quickened, made more alive, as He passed in. So vivid that the men of the old world could listen to His preaching. So vivid that Moses and Elias—those eager, impetuous leaders—in that wondrous life could not be held by its bonds, but broke through to stand on the mountain with Christ a thousand years after their death. So vivid that Lazarus (whom our Lord describes as in Abraham's bosom) is depicted as living a full, clear, intelligent life, and Dives as thinking anxiously about his five brothers on earth.

That was surely no unconscious life which St. Paul saw when he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable things, nor was it a blank unconsciousness that he looked for in his desire "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. i. 23).

Do you want further proof? Look at our Lord and the thief on the cross. "To-day," said

* Our "39 Articles" were originally 42, and the 40th ran: "They which say that the souls of those who depart hence do sleep, being without all sense, feeling, or perceiving till the Day of Judgment, . . . do utterly dissent from the right belief declared to us in Holy Scripture."

Jesus, "thou shalt be with Me." To-night, when our dead bodies are hanging upon the cross, you and I will be together. And surely it means we shall be conscious of each other as the two who hung dying together on Calvary.

Beyond all question God has revealed to you plainly enough that your beloved has gone into a full, vivid, conscious life. He is more alive to-day than he ever was on earth.

What follows? This. If I am fully conscious, what am I conscious of? Surely, first of all I must be conscious of myself, conscious of the continuity of my personal identity, conscious of the continuity of my personal character. I must feel that I am the same "I," I am still "myself." You remember what our Lord said from the other side of the grave: "Handle Me and see it is I MYSELF."

It is I myself, the very same self. It is they themselves, the very same selves whom I loved and who loved me so dearly. In that solemn hour after death, believe it, your boy, your wife, your husband, who is experiencing the startling revelations of the new life, is feeling that life as an unbroken continuance of the life begun on earth. Only the environment is changed. He feels himself the same boy or man that he was an hour ago, with the same character, aspirations, desires, the same love and courage and hope. But oh, what a different view of all things! How

clearly he recognises God's love and holiness ! How clearly he sees himself—his whole past life ! If ever he cared for Christ and His will, how longingly, wonderingly, he is reaching out to Him ! If ever he loved you tenderly on earth, how deeply and tenderly he is loving you to-day !

What else have you learned ? That HE REMEMBERS CLEARLY the old life and the old home and the old comrades and the old scenes on earth. There is no conjecturing about that. That goes without saying if "I" am the same "I" in that world. Personal identity of course postulates memory which binds into one the old life and the new. And the Bible takes that for granted. We saw that Lazarus remembered Dives, and that Dives remembered Lazarus and remembered his old home and the five young brothers who grew up with him. He remembers that they have grown to be selfish men like himself, and is troubled for them. And Abraham assumes it as a matter of course : "My son, remember that thou in thy lifetime," etc. Our Lord comes back from death remembering all the past as if death made no chasm at all in His memory. "Go and meet Me in Galilee," He says. "Lo, I have told you" (before I died). The redeemed in the future life are represented as remembering and praising God who had redeemed them from their sins on earth.

So you may be quite sure that your dear one is remembering you and storing up in his memory all your love in the past.

And he has taken with him all the treasures of mind and soul which by God's grace he has won for himself on earth. A man can take nothing of the external things—of gold or lands. Nothing of what he HAS, but all of what he IS—all that he has gained IN HIMSELF. The treasures of memory, of disciplined powers, of enlarged capacities, of a pure and loving heart. All the enrichment of the mind by study, all the love of man, all the love of God, all the ennobling of character which has come through the struggle after right and duty. These are the true treasures which go on with us into that land where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt.

And he is "WITH CHRIST."

The Bible teaches that the faithful who have died in Christ are happy and blest in Paradise, even though the Final Heaven and the Beatific Vision are still but things to be longed for far off in the future. Lazarus is "comforted" after his hard life on earth. "The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God; there shall no torment touch them." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord . . . they rest from their labours." But best of all it assures us that they are WITH CHRIST. "Lord Jesus

receive my spirit," the dying Stephen prayed as he was passing into the Unseen. They are "absent from the body," says St. Paul, "at home with the Lord." They "depart to be with Christ, which is far better."

"With Christ." One has to write carefully here. The full vision of the divine glory and goodness and love is reserved for the final stage of existence in Heaven, where nothing that defileth shall enter in, whereas this Intermediate Life is one with many imperfections and faults, quite unready for that vision of glory. But, for all that, St. Paul believed that the presence of Christ was vouchsafed in that Waiting Land, in some such way, we may suppose, as on earth long ago. Only an imperfect revelation of the Son of God. And yet—and yet—oh, how one longs for it! Think of being near Him, even in some such relation as were the disciples long ago!

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with Him then!"

Yes, St. Paul seems to say, you shall be with Him, you shall have that longing gratified in some measure even before you go to Heaven. So that Paradise, poor and imperfect as it is compared with the Heaven beyond, is surely a state to be greatly desired.

I can imagine some mourner shrinking from

the thought that Paradise, into which his dear one has gone, is not the final Heaven. Nay, shrink not. Paradise means the Park of God, the Garden of God, the place of rest and peace and refreshing shade. The park is not the palace, but it is the precincts of the palace. Paradise is not Heaven, but it is the courtyard of Heaven. And (the dearest, tenderest assurance of all) they are with Christ. Is not that sufficient answer to many questions? At any rate the Bible definitely teaches that.

Publishers' Note.—This whole subject of the Life Beyond is fully dealt with in the writer's "Gospel of the Hereafter" 10th edition. (Hodder & Stoughton, 2s. 6d.)

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE

III—THE LIFE BEYOND (*continued*)

IX

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE

III—THE LIFE BEYOND (*continued*)

I

SHALL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER IN THAT LIFE? Why not? As George Macdonald somewhere pertinently asks, "Shall we be greater fools in Paradise than we are here?"

This is a perfectly apt retort, and not at all flippant, as it may seem at first. It is based on the belief suggested by common sense and confirmed by Scripture that our life there will be the natural continuous development of our life here, and not some utterly unconnected existence. If consciousness, personal identity, character, love, memory, fellowship, intercourse go on in that life, why should there be a question raised about knowing one another?

If I am the same "I," the same person, still alive, still conscious, still thinking, still remembering, still loving, still longing for my dear ones, still capable of intercourse with others, why may I not without definite proof

assume the fact of recognition? Surely it should require strong evidence to make me believe the contrary. It is one thing to avoid reckless assertions without any foundation, it is quite another thing to have so little trust in God that we are afraid to make a fair inference such as we would unhesitatingly make in like conditions here—just because it seems to us “too good to be true.” Nothing is too good to be true where God is concerned.

Why, even if the Bible were to give you no hint of it, do you not see that the deepest, noblest instincts that God has implanted in us cry out for recognition of our departed? and where God is concerned it is not too much to say that the deepest, noblest instincts are, in a sense, prophecies. This passionate affection, the noblest thing that God has implanted in us, makes it impossible to believe that we should be but solitary, isolated spirits amongst a crowd of others whom we did not know—that we should live in the society of happy souls hereafter and never know that the spirit next us was that of a mother or husband or friend or child. We know that the Paradise and earth lives come from the same God, who is the same always. Into this life He never sends us alone. There is the mother’s love waiting and the family affection around us; and, as we grow older, love and friendship and association with others are one

of the great needs and pleasures of life, and one of the chief means of training the higher side of us. Unless His method changes we may surely hope that He will do something similar hereafter, for love is the plant that must overtop all others in the whole Kingdom of God.

Again, love and friendship must be LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP for SOME ONE. If we do not know any one, then we cannot love, and human love must die without an object. But the Bible makes it a main essential of the religious life that "he that loveth God loveth his brother also."

If we shall not know one another, why then this undying memory of departed ones, this aching void that is never filled on earth? Alas for us! for we are worse off than the lower animals. The calf is taken from the cow, the kittens are taken from their mother, and in a few days they are forgotten. But the poor human mother never forgets. When her head is bowed with age, when she has forgotten nearly all else on earth, you can bring the tears into her eyes by speaking of the child that died in her arms forty years ago. Will God disappoint that tender love, that one supreme thing which is "the most like God within the soul"?

II

There can be no real reason, I repeat, for doubting the fact of recognition, unless the

Bible should distinctly state the contrary. And, so far from doing this, the Bible, in its very few references to the hereafter life, always seems to assume the fact, and never in any way contradicts it.

Notice first the curiously persistent formula in which Old Testament chroniclers speak of death. "He died in a good old age and was gathered unto his people, and they buried him." "Gathered unto his people" can hardly mean burial with his people, for the burial is mentioned after it. It comes between the dying and the burial. And I note that even at Moses' burial on the lone mountain-top this phrase is solemnly used: "The Lord said unto him, Get thee up into the mount, and die in the mount, AND BE GATHERED TO THY PEOPLE." Miriam was buried in the distant desert, Aaron's body lay on the slopes of Mount Hor, and the wise little mother who made the ark of bulrushes long ago had found a grave, I suppose, in the brickfields of Egypt. Did it not mean that he came back to them all in the Life Unseen when he was "gathered to his people"?

David seemed to think that he would know his dead child: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Our Lord assumes that Dives and Lazarus knew each other. And in another passage He uses a very homely illustration of a friendly gathering when He speaks of those who shall

“sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom.” And again, in His advice about the right use of riches: “Make to yourselves friends by the means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye die they may receive you into the everlasting habitations” (Luke xvi. 9). Surely that at least suggests recognition and a pleasant welcoming on the other side. I remember well how, in the pain of a great bereavement, His words to the penitent thief came into my life like a message from the Beyond: “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” If anybody knew, surely Jesus knew. If His words meant anything, surely they meant we shall be conscious of each other, we shall know each other as did the two friendless ones who hung on the cross together.

Then I see St. Paul (though he is referring to the later stage of existence) comforting bereaved mourners with the thought of meeting those whom Christ shall bring with Him. Where would be the comfort of it if they should not know them? He expects to meet his converts and present them to Christ. How could he say this if he thought he would not know them?

I wonder if anybody really doubts it after all. Just think of it! With Christ in Paradise, and not knowing or loving any comrade soul! Is that possible in the land of love? With our dear ones in Paradise, and never a

thrill of recognition as we touch in spiritual intercourse the mother, or wife, or husband, or child for whose presence we are longing! Cannot you imagine our wondering joy when our questionings are set at rest? Cannot you imagine the Lord in His tender reproach, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

When a mother asks how can she know him who died as a child twenty years ago, one feels that recognition must be something spiritual and not depending on visible shape. Even here on earth much of our recognition is spiritual. Soul recognises soul. We recognise in some degree good and evil character of souls even through the coarse covering of the body. We instinctively, as we say, trust or distrust people on first appearance. Or again, a slight young stripling goes away to India and returns in twenty years a big, bearded, broad-shouldered man, with practically no outward resemblance to the boy that went away. But even though he strive to conceal his identity he cannot hide it long from his mother. She looks into his eyes and her soul leaps out to him. Call it instinct, insight, intuition, sympathy—what you please—it is the spiritual vision, soul recognising soul. If that spiritual vision apart from bodily shape plays so great a part in recognition here, may it not be all-sufficient there? In that

life where there is consciousness, character, memory, love, longing for our dear ones, and power of communication, is it conceivable that we should have intercourse with our loved and longed-for, without any thrill of recognition? Surely not. Instinctively we shall know.

“It was not, mother, that I knew thy face—
It was my heart that cried out Mother!”

III

We pass on to consider the relations between ourselves and our departed ones. Do they know now of our life on earth? Can there be between us comradeship in any sense? Can there be love and care and sympathy and prayer between us on these two sides of the grave, as there is between friends on earth on the two sides of the Atlantic?

The Church says yes, and calls it in her Creed the Communion of Saints. The Communion of Saints—a very grand name, but it means only a very simple thing—just loving sympathy between us and these elder brothers and sisters beyond the grave.

You see that it is a prominent doctrine of the Church's Creed, and, rightly understood, it is a very beautiful and touching doctrine—not only because of the union of fellowship with our departed, but especially because the bond of that union and fellowship is our

dear Lord Himself, whom we and they alike love and thank and praise and pray to and worship, and from whom we and they alike derive the Divine sustenance of our souls.

Yes, you say, that is a beautiful thought. But is that all? My poor heart is craving for more communion than that. Do they know or care about my love and sorrow to-day? And are they helping me? Are they praying for me to that dear Lord whom we both love—in whose presence we both stand to-day? And can I do anything for them on my side in this “Communion of Saints”?

Do they pray for us or help us in any way? Does any one need to ask that question?

Since they are with Christ, of course they pray. The world to come is the very atmosphere of prayer. St. John in his vision tells of “the offering of the golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of the saints” (Rev. v. 8). And again, three chapters later, the angel stood to offer the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar.

Can you imagine your mother, who never went to bed here without earnest prayer for her boy, going into that life with full consciousness and full memory of the dear old home on earth, and never a prayer for her boy rising to the altar of God?

Why, even the selfish Dives, after death, could not help praying for his brothers!

Ay, she is praying for you. I think amongst the most precious prayers before the golden altar are the mother's prayers for her boy who is left behind on earth.

But, you say, She does not know anything about my life or my needs on earth. Even if she did not know, she would surely pray for you. But I am not so sure that she does not know. There are several hints in Scripture to suggest that she does know—hints so strong that if you are doing anything now that she would like, I should advise you to keep on doing it, and if you are doing anything now that you would not wish her to know, I would advise you to stop doing it.

Our Lord represents Abraham as knowing all about Moses and the prophets, who came a thousand years after his time (Luke xvi. 29).

Our Lord distinctly tells the Jews that Abraham in that life knew all about His mission on earth. "Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John viii. 56).

At the Transfiguration, too, Moses and Elias came out from that Waiting Life to speak with Christ of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Does it not suggest at once that they and their great comrades within the veil were watching eagerly and knowing all about the life of Christ and the great crisis of man's redemption toward

which they had been working on earth long years ago?

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews apparently believed that our departed ones were watching our course, for after a long list of the great departed heroes of faith in olden time he writes to encourage us in the race on earth: "Seeing that we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. xii.). And though the word "witnesses" here may be ambiguous, all our best commentators (including Bishop Westcott) admit that the picture suggested is that of the runners in the amphitheatre on earth, and the galleries of creation crowded with sympathetic watchers like the "old boys" of a great English school coming back at the annual school games to cheer on the lads, remembering how they themselves had run long ago in the very same fields.

IV

But, somebody says, she might not be quite happy if she knew all that her children had to go through. Seeing that at any rate she remembers them, do you think she would be more happy if she knew that they might have to go through troubles of which she could not learn anything? Put yourself in the place of any mother that you know, and ask if it would make her any happier to stop

all letters about her children who she felt might be in danger or trouble. Are you quite sure that in that spirit life a peaceful contentment like that of the cow who forgets her calf is the highest thing to be desired? The higher any soul grows on earth the less can it escape unselfish sorrow for the sake of others. Must it not be so in that land also? Surely the Highest Himself must have more sorrow than any one else for the sins and troubles of men. Have you ever thought of that "eternal pain" of God? If there be joy in His presence over one sinner that repenteth, must there not be pain in His presence over one that repenteth not?

There are surely higher things in God's plans for His saints than mere selfish happiness and content. There is the blessedness that comes of sympathy with Him over human sorrow or pain. We but degrade the thought of the blessedness of the redeemed when we desire that they should escape that.

And it is a strong confirmation of that belief when I find it the belief of the great bishops and teachers of the early Church in its purest and most loving days, the days nearest to those of Christ and His apostles.

St. Cyprian, the martyr bishop of Carthage, who was born in the century after St. John's death (A.D. 200), made an agreement with his friend Cornelius that whichever of them died first should in the Unseen Land remember in prayer him who was left behind.

St. Gregory Nazianzen is preaching the funeral sermon of St. Basil. "He still prays for the people," he says, "for he did not so leave us as to have left us altogether." And in his funeral sermon over his own father: "I am satisfied that he accomplishes there now by his prayers more than he ever did by his teaching, just in proportion as he approaches nearer to God after having shaken off the fetters of his body."

I could give you long lists of references of this kind showing the belief of the early Church.

V

But sympathy and prayer must not be on one side only. It must be mutual in the Communion of Saints—they remembering and loving and thinking about us, we remembering and loving and thinking about them; they asking from their Lord blessing for us, we asking from Him blessing for them. For surely they are not above wanting His blessings still—not even the best of them: though safe with Him, though forgiven their sins, they are still imperfect, still needing to grow in grace, in purification, in fitness for the Final Heaven by and by. And we can help their growth as they can help ours.

I think we should all be happier and better, I think the Unseen World would come back more clearly on our horizon, if we kept our

dear ones in our prayers as we used to do before they died. Do not keep any hidden chambers in your heart shut out from Christ. Bring your dear departed ones to Him as you bring all else to Him. He knows what is best for them. Pray only for that. Pray "Lord, help them to grow closer to Thee. Help them, if it may be, to help others, and make them happy in Thy great kingdom until we meet again." Pray something like that. Oh, how can you help doing it, if you love them and believe in prayer !

"How can I cease to pray for thee ? Somewhere
 In God's wide universe thou art to-day.
 Can He not reach thee with His tender care ?
 Can He not hear me when for thee I pray ?
 Somewhere thou livest and hast need of Him,
 Somewhere thy soul sees higher heights to climb,
 And somewhere, too, there may be valleys dim
 Which thou must pass to reach the heights sublime.
 Then all the more because thou canst not hear
 Poor human words of blessing will I pray.
 O true, brave heart, God bless thee, whereso'er
 In God's wide universe thou art to-day !"

There is much more to learn if there were time for it to-day. Hints as to growth and purification in that life. Hints as to unselfish ministry for others. But probably I have said enough to set you thinking and, I hope, to set you studying the subject for yourselves.

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE
IV—THE MEN FOR WHOM WE ARE AFRAID

X

THE MEN WHO DIED IN BATTLE

IV—THE MEN FOR WHOM WE ARE AFRAID

I

UP to this we have been ignoring a large proportion of the men who died in battle. To avoid misunderstanding we have kept in view those only of whom we had hopes that they died in the fear and love of God. But there is no evading the thought that between these and the utterly reprobate there are many who belong to neither class—mixed characters in all varying degrees of good or evil. Of many of them it could be said that those who knew them best saw much that was good and lovable in them. But it could not be said that they had consciously and definitely chosen for Christ.

They must form the majority of those whose bodies lie to-day beneath the battle-fields of France. Therefore one cannot help wondering about them. One day death overtook them. The thought of them comes forcibly when some morning the newspapers

startle us with the story of an awful carnage in which thousands have passed out of life in a moment, and the horror of the catastrophe is deepened by the thought that they have been called away suddenly, unprepared.

What of their position in the Life Beyond ? Our Christian charity prompts us to hope the best for them, all the more because they have died fighting bravely for their country. But are we justified in hoping ? It is impossible for thoughtful, sympathetic men to evade that question. It is cowardly to evade it. At any rate a sermon on the men who died in battle can hardly pass over altogether the thought of the majority, and it cannot be wrong for us to think about them humbly and reverently.

II

First, I point out to you the solemn responsibility of this earth life, in which Acts make Habits, and Habits make Character, and Character makes Destiny. I am about to point out the grave probability, to say the least of it, that in a very real sense this life may be the sole probation time for man. But this does not close the question of the poor bereaved mother weeping for her dead son : " If any soul has not in penitence and faith definitely accepted Jesus Christ in this life, is it for ever impossible that he may do so in any other life ? "

I answer unhesitatingly, God forbid ! else what of all the dead children down through the ages, and all the dead idiots, and all the millions of dead heathen, and all the poor sinners in Christian lands who in their dreary, dingy lives had never any fair chance of knowing their Lord in a way that would lead them to love Him, and who have never even thought about accepting or rejecting Him ? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? Shall not the loving Father do His best for all ? Our Lord knew that if the mighty works done in Capernaum had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented. Does He not there suggest that He would take thought for those men of Tyre and Sidon in the Unseen Land ? Does He not know the same of many gone into that Unseen Life from heathen lands and Christian lands, who would have loved Him if they knew Him as He really is, and who have but begun to know Him in the world of the dead—of many who in their ignorance have tried to respond to the dim light of Conscience within, and only learned within the veil really to know Him, the Lord of the Conscience, “the light which lighteth every man coming into the world” (John i. 9).

Here is no question of encouraging careless, godless men with the hope of a new probation. Here is no question of men wilfully rejecting Christ. The merry, thoughtless child—the imbecile—the heathen—had no thought of

rejecting Christ. The poor sinner in Christian lands brought up in evil surroundings, who, though he had heard of Christ, yet saw no trace of Christ in his dreary life, cannot be said to have rejected Christ. The honest sceptic, who in the last generation had been taught as a prominent truth of Christianity that God decrees certain men to Eternal Heaven and certain men to Eternal Hell, not for any good or evil they have done, but to show His power and glory, and who had therefore in obedience to conscience frankly rejected Christianity — can he be said to have rejected Christ ?

The possibility in this life of putting oneself outside the pale of salvation is quite awful enough, without our making it worse. It is not for us to judge who is outside the pale of salvation, nor to limit the love of God by our little shibboleths. It is on a man's WILL, not on his knowledge or ignorance, that destiny depends. God only can judge that. All the subtle influences which go to make character are known to Him alone. He alone can weigh the responsibility of the will in any particular case. And surely we know Him well enough humbly to trust His love to the uttermost for every soul whom He has created.

III

But this hope must not ignore the solemn thought that in a very real sense the probation of this life seems the determining factor

in human destiny—even for the unthinking, even for the ignorant — nay, even for the heathen who could never have heard of Christ here. Rightly understood, all that I have said does not conflict with this. It may seem strange at first sight to think of the heathen as having any real probation here. Yet, mark it well, it is of this heathen man who could not consciously have accepted Christ in this life that St. Paul implies that his attitude in the Unseen Life towards Him who is the Light of the world is determined by his attitude in this life towards the imperfect light of conscience that he has: “If the Gentiles who have not the Law do by nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law are a law unto themselves, which show the works of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness” (Rom. ii. 14).

We may assume that St. Paul means that the heathen man who in this life followed the dim light of his conscience is the man who will rejoice in the full light when it comes, and that the man who has been wilfully shutting out that dim light of conscience here is thereby rendering himself less capable of accepting the fuller light when he meets it hereafter. In other words, this life is his probation—he is forming on earth the moral bent of his future life.

We may assume the same of men in similar

conditions in Christian lands, men brought up amid ignorance and crime, men brought up in infidel homes, men to whom Christ has been so unattractively presented that they saw no beauty in Him, men who in the squalid monotony of the struggle for bread had little to make them think of Christ at all. They all have the light of God in some degree, and, by their attitude towards the right that they know, are determining on earth their attitude towards God in the Hereafter...They are forming character, and *character tends to permanence*.

The "outer darkness," it would seem, comes not from absence of light, but from blindness of sight. The joy of Heaven is impossible to the unholy, just as is the joy of beautiful scenery to the blind or the joy of exquisite music to the deaf. Probation in this life simply means that in this first stage of his being a man either is or is not blinding his eyes and dulling his ears and hardening his heart so as to make himself incapable of higher things in the life to come.

IV

If, then, it be possible even for a heathen to have in this life sufficient probation to determine his attitude towards God for ever, how much more for a man in the full light of Christianity. In view of this the great law of life, that CHARACTER TENDS TO PERMANENCE, may it not be awfully true that a man who,

with true knowledge of Christ, wilfully and deliberately turns from Him all through this life, should thus render himself incapable of turning to Him in any other life? *With true knowledge of Christ*, I say, not with knowledge of some repulsive misrepresentation of Christ.

For think what it means to reject Christ wilfully, with true knowledge of Him :

“ His voice still comes as we tramp on,
With a sorrowful fall in its pleading tones :

‘ Thou wilt tire in the dreary ways of sin.

I left My home to bring thee in.

In its golden street are no weary feet,

Its rest is pleasant, its songs are sweet.’

And we shout back angrily, hurrying on

To a terrible home where rest is none :

‘ We want not Your city’s golden street,

Nor to hear its constant song.’

And still Christ keeps on loving us, loving all along.

“ Rejected still, He pursues each one :

‘ My child, what more could thy God have done ?

Thy sin hid the light of Heaven from Me

When alone in the darkness I died for thee ;

Thy sin of to-day in its shadow lay

Between My face and One turned away.’

And we stop and turn for a moment’s space

To fling back that love in the Saviour’s face,

To give His heart yet another grief,

And glory in the wrong.

And still Christ keeps on loving us, loving all along.”

Is it hard to believe that a man thus knowing Christ and wilfully rejecting Him should thereby risk the ruin of his soul ? Can we not recognise this awful law of life : that wilful sin against light tends to darkening of the light—that every rejection of God and good

draws blood, as it were, on the spiritual retina—that a life of such rejections of the light tends to make one incapable of receiving the light for ever?

If this be so, it is not at all fair to misrepresent it by saying that God cruelly stereotypes a man's soul at death and will refuse him permission to repent after death, however much he may want to. The voice of the Holy Ghost within tells us that this could never be true of the Father. We must believe that through all eternity, if the worst sinner felt touched by the love of God and wanted to turn to Him, that man would be saved. What we dread is that the man may not want, and so may have rendered himself incapable of doing so. We dread not God's will, but the man's own will.

Character tends to permanence. Free will is a glorious but a dangerous prerogative. All experience leads towards the belief that a human will may so distort itself as to grow incapable of good. Even a character not hardened into permanent evil may grow incapable of the highest good. A soul even forgiven through the mercy of God may "enter into life halt and maimed," like a consumptive patient cured of his disease but going through life with only one lung.

V

Though the Bible does not give an absolutely definite pronouncement on this question

yet the whole trend of its teaching leads to the belief that this life is our probation time. It everywhere calls for immediate repentance. It warns men of the danger of so rejecting Christ as to render themselves incapable for ever of receiving Him. And this has been the general belief of the Church in all ages. Even in all the hopeful words of the ancient fathers about Christ preaching to the spirits in prison, who in the dark old-world days "had sometime been disobedient," they add some such significant phrase as "that He might convert those *who were capable of turning to Him.*"

And human experience of character tending to permanence makes this fact of human probation awfully probable. There is nothing in Scripture, nor in its interpretation by the Church, nor in human experience, to conflict with the statement that in this life Acts make Habits, and Habits make Character, and Character makes Destiny.

What new discoveries of God's power and mercy may await us in eternity we cannot know, but from all we do know we are justified in thinking that (in the sense which I have stated) a man's life in this world determines his destiny—at any rate that a man who presumes recklessly on chances in the future is taking terrible risks.

The Bible gives no encouragement to hope that one who with full knowledge of Christ keeps on wilfully rejecting Him all through

this life will be able to turn to Him in any other life.

VI

Yet we dare offer comfort to anxious mourners grieving over careless and unsatisfactory boys who are gone. We can tell them that God only is the Judge of what constitutes irrevocable rejection of good, that we cannot tell who has irrevocably "done despite to the Spirit of grace," and that the deep love and pain of Christ for sinful man remains for ever and ever. We may tell the poor mother that her deep love and pain for her dead son is but a faint shadow of the deep love and pain of God—that no one will be surprised or trapped in his ignorance—that no one will be lost whom it is possible for God to save—that no one will be lost until "the heavenly Father has as it were thrown His arms around him and looked him full in the face with the bright eyes of His love, and then of his own deliberate will he would not have Him."

Ay, and more than that we can say. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one born of the Spirit." Let no man limit His holy influence. Surely He is nearer to the hearts of men when Death is every moment knocking at the door.

When I hear of a careless boy as he charges

into battle "putting up what he could remember of a little prayer," not for himself, but for the dear old mother at home in case he should die,—when I see him steadfastly facing death for the sake of duty, or comforting the last moments of a dying friend, I know that God is near him. When I read of a man killed because he rushed out amid a hail of bullets to bring in a wounded comrade I feel that such deeds come but through the Spirit of God, and I seem to hear the voice of Christ who died for men—"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

And so I hope greatly, for I know not how far that loving Spirit of God has gone with that man's soul. I would not make light of life's awful responsibility. I would not have you encourage mere sentimental optimism. But I would say to every poor troubled mother to-day: Christ cares more than you care. Christ will at any rate do for your boy the best that may be done for him. Christ will not forget him. Trust Christ with him.

"Through all depths of pain and loss
Sinks the plummet of His Cross;
Never yet abyss was found
Deeper than that Cross could sound."

So we leave them in His hands. Where better could we leave them?

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

XI

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

“Sin entered into the world.”—ROM. v. 12.

I

SOME one has remarked that it is a very fatiguing thing to be a human being. If we compare ourselves with the other animals we see how hard our case is. We have in the first place to stand upright, a feat for which we are not yet completely adapted. And then we have to do more or less thinking. We cannot help it. And then we feel something within constraining us to try to be good, and as soon as we try we find evil up against us. Which forces us to think harder. For we are perplexed as to the “Why” of this evil. To-day the horror of this war crisis increases our perplexity.

So, when the Bible tells us “sin entered into the world,” the questions almost necessarily arise, How did sin enter into the world? Why did sin enter into the world? Why did the good God allow it to do so? Since the world

began, at least since Christianity began, this has been one of life's greatest problems. That a God who is revealed to us as all goodness and love should permit evil to defile His fair creation—should allow weak men and women to be attacked, ay, and very often conquered too, by the powers of the Spirit of Darkness—is a question which has occupied the mightiest minds.

The ancient philosophers framed a theory that something inherent in the nature of things made it impossible for God to get rid of evil.

The Persian sages told of Ormuzd and Ahrimanes, the great Spirits of Light and Darkness, struggling ever in endless conflict, the good god being stronger than the evil, but not strong enough to vanquish him altogether.

And in the infancy of Christianity the same difficulty was brought forward. This atheistic dilemma was continually flung in the teeth of its teachers: "Evil exists and is powerful in the world, and your God does not destroy it. It must be, therefore, either that He wills to do so and cannot, or that He can do so and will not; and in either case He cannot be all-good and all-powerful."

And these Christian teachers found it hard to answer. And we to-day find it hard to answer still. As thinking men and women turn away sad and puzzled from beholding the victories of evil in the world the question

must often have arisen that is told of the poor savage in the story-books of our childhood. When Robinson Crusoe was teaching his man about God and religion, when he told him how the power and wisdom and goodness of God had made everything beautiful and good, and that good it would have remained but for the opposition of the devil: "Then why not God kill devil?" asks poor Friday. And his teacher says, "I could give him no answer."

And thousands to-day looking out on the tangled web of human life—watching the frequent victory of evil over good—seeing God's beautiful world soiled and defaced by lusts, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and such-like—can understand for themselves the difficulty so simply expressed by the poor puzzled savage. It is curious to see this same difficulty of the early ages being put forward recently in a prominent philosophical journal. The writer comes to the conclusion, as he looks out into the puzzles of life around him, that, if God is almighty, then sensible people must conclude that He cannot be all-good. It is the old question, "Why does not God kill the devil?"

II

I am not foolish enough to try to answer these deep metaphysical questions. But I think much of the difficulty arises from the

ambiguity of the word "almighty." Can God do everything? I answer, No. There are things which God cannot do, because they are contradictory things. He cannot make a thing to be and not to be at the same time, for these things are contradictory to each other. He cannot make a door to be open and shut at the same time, for that would be contradictory. And he cannot give a man a free will to do right or wrong and yet secure that no wrong shall be done, for that, too, would be contradictory.

If God had chosen to make us lower beings, without free will, evil might be kept out. But character cannot be made that way. Somebody has well said that God, growing weary of the ceaseless uniform obedience of sun and stars and planets and all nature, obeying because they could not do otherwise, at last said: "'Let Us make man' and give him a will free to obey or disobey, that I may have the joy of a voluntary obedience."

I do not know what God might do in another world, such as heaven, or with another race, such as the angels. But this I do know, judging from what I know of myself, and other men and women like myself—and believing that character-formation is the one thing of supreme importance in the sight of God—I cannot even conceive the existence of this world without the possibility of evil standing side by side with good.

III

For just think for a moment of the only possible ways, as far as we can see, in which evil could have been kept out of the world :—

(1) God might have created only beings incapable of doing wrong. But would this be to any of us a satisfactory solution ? Surely, if you think of it, you will see that a man who is incapable of doing wrong is, from the very nature of the case, incapable also of doing right. There can be no right except for him who is able to do wrong if he wishes. There can be no moral praise or blame—no moral character at all—except where it is possible for one to choose between right and wrong, and do whichever he pleases. The planets rolling on their heavenly way act precisely as God designs them to do. But you never think of calling their acts right. You never think of praising the planets for doing them. Why ? Because they have no choice, no power to do anything else. You never speak of them as careful or obedient, because it is impossible for them to be careless or disobedient. And no man could speak of you as kind, or honest, or pure, or good unless it were quite possible for you, if you choose, to be unkind, and dishonest, and impure, and evil. Therefore, you see, he only can be said to do right who is also able to do wrong if he choose ; and therefore the difficulty about

evil would not be removed if God created men or machines incapable of doing wrong.

(2) Well, you will say, "But, even though He made us with a free will to choose, yet He might have kept us free from all temptation to sin." Do not some of us think that that would be a grand thing to do? Some of you mothers here, with your little innocent boys at home—you think, if you could always keep them innocent by always keeping them free from temptation, you would feel so happy about them. You are afraid to send them to school lest they learn about evil. You tremble at their mixing with young men as they grow up lest they should be tempted to wrong. You would like to keep them sheltered like hot-house growths from all the fierce storms of temptation in the future.

Ah, it is no use trying to do that. That is not God's way at all. Hot-house training will never make a hardy tree, and the innocence of a life that has never been tempted is but of very little value in the sight of God.

INNOCENCE is not RIGHTEOUSNESS. They are very different things. INNOCENCE belongs to the little child who has never been tempted. RIGHTEOUSNESS belongs to the developed saint who has been tempted and has struggled and perhaps sometimes fallen, but by God's grace has conquered at last. And God will not be content with INNOCENCE. He wants to see in us RIGHTEOUSNESS, which means *innocence*

maintained in the face of temptation. That is surely the meaning of the great world-allegory of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, to which our first parents came. Your child and every other child of man must come also to that "knowledge of good and evil." It is God's will for him that he should. He must distinctly face the issue between them, and by God's grace choose the good. If you would keep from losing heart, if you would keep high, glad, optimistic thoughts in the presence of sin, you must realise the function of temptation in life.

It is most important to keep in mind this distinction between Innocence and Righteousness. Earnest, godly people often talk sentimentally about the innocence of childhood; and with regret, comparing it with their present state of temptation and struggle. We find the sentiment frequent in poetry. You remember Hood :

"I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high ;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy."

Perhaps he was, but perhaps he was not. At any rate, character can only be formed by means of temptation. That is God's will for man, and there is no use in trying to avoid it.

Your wish for your child is a very natural wish, but it is a very foolish wish. Character is never formed by such methods as that. No! Try to inculcate sound principles in your boy. Try with all your power and all the power that God can give you. You will need it all. You have but a few years to do it. Try it, I say, to prepare him for the perilous future—to teach him of God and Right and Duty and Character, and of the strength that cometh to men from above; and then—let the conflict come. You must, whether you will or no: it is the decree of God. It is through conflict only that character is formed. It is through conflict and struggle and much tribulation that men enter into the Kingdom of God.

(3) “Ah!” you will say, “conflict is all very well if my boy were sure of victory; but I look back on my own life, and I see how often the conflict resulted in the fall; and though by God’s grace I have risen and am struggling upwards, I never can lose the sad memory of those falls.”

God help us all! That is true, I fear, of most of us; but even for that we need not retract our words. In the Kingdom of God, as everywhere else, victory can only be gained at the risk of defeat. Gains can only be won at the risk of corresponding losses. It would have been far better to have been tempted without ever falling; but—I am not afraid to

say it—it is better, ay, infinitely better, to be tempted and fall and rise again, with brave resolve for the future, than never to have experienced temptation at all. Without temptation there is no character. It is “to him that overcometh” character belongs. “To him that overcometh,” said Christ, “I will give to sit with Me in My kingdom.”

So you see the question with which we started is not so utterly puzzling. If character be the one supreme thing in God’s sight, and if character can only be won by conflict with evil, it is hard to see (humanly speaking) how our moral training—our character-formation, which is our preparation for the Kingdom of God—could be accomplished without the possibility of evil in the world. Where God has made beings with a free power of choice there must always be a possibility of their sometimes choosing wrongly. Right doing is only praiseworthy because it implies that wrong might have been done and was not done. If God had chosen to make us *lower* beings without free wills it might be different. But He chose to make us free. And the possibility of evil is implied in that fact of the freedom of the human will.

IV

In this state of training, then, we see that there must be a possibility of evil. But now I want you to see the purpose performed by

that possibility in the moulding of human character—and that is really the important point to think of. It does not concern us much to understand the mystery of the Origin of Evil. It concerns us largely that this evil may be made to accomplish good, that by a brave and manful wrestling with it we grow stronger and nobler and better than we could ever be without such conflict.

What a mysterious, what a solemn thing it is to think of this great character-making life of ours! How the process is going on every hour of the day in hundreds of millions of human lives! The unceasing building up of character; the constant, unceasing choices between the good and the evil. Did you ever watch for a single day this process in yourself? You awake in the morning, and the first temptation is waiting by your pillow. It says, "You are tired; do not trouble to get up yet: what matter if you have to hurry out of your room without proper time for prayer and thought of God, and earnest resolve for the day before you?" Ah! the character-making has begun work for the day, and the result of this first act will be to make you a little bit better or a little bit worse. If you resist that temptation your will will be stronger to-morrow; if you yield, you will be weaker to-morrow. Then you come down at breakfast to intercourse with family and servants; and you have some little tempta-

tion to be careless, or selfish, or ill-tempered ; or the morning letters come, and bring you news that vexes or elates you. Before that hour has passed some little part of your character will be formed for good or evil—or, most probably, for part good and part evil.

And now you are out at your daily occupation, and the character-formation is going on still. The choice comes to you more than once in the day between being utterly strict and honourable and truthful, and being a little bit lax as to righteousness of life, to gain a business advantage or a pleasure of some kind. Why need I go on ? To-morrow, or any day, watch yourselves and those whom you know best, and you will see in little things, all day long, the pathetic struggle and the victory or the defeat of human souls. There will be men and women, in their homes, yielding to this or that petty temptation ; and there will be others battling bravely in the unnoticed fight—with temper and meanness, and selfishness of life—and changing their stumbling-blocks into stepping-stones towards God by placing their feet upon them. There will be men in their business, yielding to the temptation to be mean and shabby and unrighteous ; and there will be others to whom the handling of money will be no more ignoble than the handling of the patriot's sword—with whom the shop-counter and the office-desk will be kept pure from evil as the altar of God. What a solemn, what a

pathetic fact it is, this constant character-making!

Let me try to leave on you the impression of the great importance of these little conflicts with the Evil One, so that by God's grace you may learn not to make light of them—that by God's help you may bravely resist them, and, finally, trample down Satan under your feet.

One of our own poets has told us, "Each step in life is treading on a chord that vibrates through eternity." Each act of good or evil is character-making—that is what makes it so serious. If it be of good it will leave its result in strengthening and ennobling you. If it be of evil it will leave its result in lowering and degrading you—it will leave traces and consequences in your character that, remember, will not be done away with even by coming to God for forgiveness of your sins.

Young men—who talk lightly of sowing your wild oats—remember that even if you repent you will be a worse man for ever for that sowing; remember there are results in character that will not lightly pass away, that God's great law is true even for him who is forgiven: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

True, God will forgive you if you ask Him, in spite of your sin. He is more loving and merciful than the kindest father on earth. He will purify you if you turn to Him, even after "sowing your wild oats." But remember

that purifying will only be done according to His own strict laws, and God only knows how terrible the struggle and conflict that may be needed to lift you back again to whence you have fallen. See the awful struggle and conflict necessary for a habitual drunkard to conquer his sin. Remember that is equally true of all sin in its own degree, and God will not purge you on any cheaper terms.

And now I have almost done. I fear I have spoken somewhat discouragingly. It is necessary sometimes.



Let me close with words of hope about this mystery of evil.

(1) Is it not hopeful to think that it is not all proceeding from our own poor sinful souls? If we had no choice but to believe that all the evils in this awful war, with all the vile abominations of humanity, proceed from the heart of poor humanity itself, very sad indeed would be our prospect. But if, as our Lord has told us, "an enemy hath done this"—God's enemy and ours—is there not hope for us in the belief that he is God's enemy as well as ours, that God is on our side against him, that therefore some day that enemy will be trampled down and God and good shall reign for ever and ever?

(2) Is it not hopeful, too, to hear the Bible

say the conflict with evil shall not be eternal ; that there was a time when it was not ; that there cometh a time when it shall not be ? Whether the story of the Fall be understood as a literal fact, or as an allegory of life and of the knowledge of good and evil, at any rate it is the expression of a great fact in the history of humanity. And it looks back to a time when evil was not, when the free wills created by God had not yet chosen the side of wrong. And the Bible looks forward to a time when evil shall be destroyed, when, however it be accomplished, there shall be no rebellion at all in the whole wide universe of God. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and death and hell, the evil and the Evil One, shall be cast into the lake of destruction. And when all evil shall be subdued unto Christ, "then shall He deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all."

(3) And last of all. We are not left alone to struggle. God, who allows the struggle, is watching it with deep interest. There is joy in His presence when we conquer a temptation and rise on "stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things."

Ah, God is glad then, and He wants us to know it. "Fear not," He says, "for I am with thee. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee."

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

XII

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

“And there shall be no more pain.”—REV. xxi. 4.

I

NO more pain ! When ? Not certainly any time during our earthly life. There is no promise of that, and our experience of life teaches us not to dream of it.

Not even, I think, in the life immediately after this—where men who have grown like to Christ cannot escape the pain of Christ—for the souls who are yet away from Him in the darkness hereafter. Nay, but somewhere in the far-off golden age to which the Bible points, when death and hell, the evil and the Evil One shall have vanished for ever out of the universe of God, “and God shall be all in all.” That day will come—

“That great far-off Divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.”

Then there shall be no more pain.

Why only then ? Why not now ? Why ? That is the pressing question of this poor

world all down the ages. And it is pressing with terrible intensity just now, as the newspaper every morning forces on us the thought of the crowds of wounded lying in their agony, and the homes all over Europe bowed down with anxiety, and almost every mother "in lamentation and great mourning—Rachel weeping for her children, who would not be comforted, because they are not."

This awful problem of suffering! Were it not for it we could hardly help believing in God and loving God. There are so many indications of His goodness and love and care everywhere around us. But this problem blocks the way. Why does God, if He be all-good and all-powerful, permit suffering in the world?

II

I am thinking of a day long ago, just after I was ordained. A lady who had been visiting in a house with sore troubles met me. Her kindly heart was vexed—she was angry with God and all the world because of what she had seen. She came straight for the poor young curate. Because I was a clergyman it seemed somehow that I was more responsible than others for God's doings in the world. She told me her opinion pretty forcibly. It was such unreal sentimentalism, she thought, to preach about a loving God while such things were happening.

I am afraid I had not much to say. It was not the first time such questions had come to me, not only from sceptical people outside, but from my own sceptical heart within. No man who longs to believe honestly in God's Fatherhood can avoid such questions. I have not got rid of my difficulties yet. And I do not expect to-day to give you satisfactory answers. But I think I know a little more than I did that day. From the study of one's Bible, from the thoughts of wise friends, from experience of suffering in others' lives and in one's own as life goes on, there is enough to be learned to anchor one's faith firmly in God, even if not to explain all difficulties. Let me tell you how it looks to me.

III

First of all, the amount of suffering is grossly exaggerated. Doctors and nurses and clergy, and people who have much sorrow, are in danger of seeing things out of proportion. Take bodily pain. In my own large parish the list of sick and suffering seldom reaches to ten at any one time. It never reaches anything like 1 per cent. Even if sickness and pain were entirely evil, people thinking of that should think also of the other ninety-nine who are enjoying good health. Of course there is much of mental pain—anxiety and sorrow—which we hear less of and which is more

enduring. But that, too, you must not exaggerate. Most of that sorrow comes from bereavement by death, which would be much less terrible if men would learn what death really means for those who are gone. I speak of this later. It is all bad enough. But don't exaggerate. If the average man does not get more than three months' illness in his life—if for every one suffering there are a hundred who are not—you have to learn that pain is only one of God's instruments for good and that it is used sparingly. There is quite enough of it for God's purposes. We all get our share of it, some time or other. But do not go imagining that the world is full of it. It is not. I know better than you do how much suffering there is in my parish. My heart is sore enough about it at times. But I ask you now—even if suffering had no moral value at all—is it so bad in any parish as to hinder your belief in the goodness of God or to shut from your view the hundreds of people who have so much to be thankful for in the happiness of their life?

IV

Next consider this. Much of the pain and suffering of the world comes from God's method of teaching us to obey the laws of life on which our happiness largely depends. To the laws of Nature, working for our good, are

attached inexorable penalties for disobedience. If you put your hand in the fire it will be burned. If you neglect health, sleep in damp clothes, eat improper food, you are breaking God's laws, and you will certainly smart for it some day that you may learn not to do it again. If you neglect your drains your child will be sick. If a railway bridge is allowed to get rotten, or a ship unseaworthy, or a mine choked with fire damp—though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in them there will be a catastrophe some day, and God will not work any miracle to prevent it. How could He carry on the universe if He did otherwise? What sort of education would it be if God were every moment to interfere with His own laws, if men were to find that carelessness and ignorance and neglect were to bring no evil consequence.

Nature does not coddle us. Nature stands no nonsense. No. Cold and cruel as it may seem at first, Professor Huxley's famous simile fairly expresses God's dealings with men as regards the laws of Nature. He takes the old picture of Satan playing at chess with man for his soul. But instead of Satan he substitutes a calm, strong angel who would rather lose than win. The chessboard is the world. The rules of the game are the laws of Nature. The calm, hidden player is always fair and just, but he never overlooks a mistake—he never gives back a false move.

I think that is true, so far as it goes, of the working of the laws of Nature, and it would be a good thing for men lightly making wrong moves on the chessboard of life to remember that there is no giving back the false move.

It is true so far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. God is not merely a calm, just angel taking his winnings and losings with equal unconcern. God is the Father, longing that we should win, and ready to provide consolation for the loser. Your little child that has died of diphtheria through your bad drains is but "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." The terrible railway accident that horrifies the nation only means that so many are transferred to a new environment. The Father who allows the dread accident to happen will see that no soul loses by being taken unprepared. Yes, God not only plays the game fairly, but wants that the losers should gain through His help more than they have lost.

V

Consider again. Our worst pain and suffering comes through sin, our own or that of others. Of others because God has bound us into a great brotherhood where the good in one helps the others and the evil in one hurts the others. I cannot dwell on that big subject, but, if you complain that you derive suffering from others

do you think it is to be compared for a moment with the benefits which you derive from others? Food, education, thought, sympathy—nay, even your very existence comes from others. Put the benefits on one side of the balance and the sufferings on the other. There is no comparison.

Most of this pain is from your own sin. It is God's way of expressing His disapproval of sin. The gravitation of sin to sorrow, says a great scientist, is as certain as that of the earth to the sun. It is a scientific fact. And it is not a fact of vengeance. It is an expression of the strong, stern love of God. God would lead His children on the royal highway of obedience, so on each side of it He places thorny hedges,—pain, remorse, dissatisfaction, loss of health and of reputation. If I do not go straight I knock against that hedge that I may be brought back to the road once more. All the pain of sin has that great object: to drive the prodigal home. And for that purpose God will spare him nothing of the awful penalties.

Take the most horrible of them. Did you ever see a man in delirium tremens—the horror, the agony, the faces of grinning devils looking out at him in the bed? Why does he suffer these horrors? Because God inflicts them? No, because he inflicts them on himself. And the God who loves him, and wants him to feel how drunkenness blasts and debases and

brutalises, has attached this punishment to his sin. God could keep off this agony, but He does not. Rather through it He says, "Oh, my son, whom I have made, whom I want to save, if I cannot save thee otherwise it is better to cast thee into this hell with the grinning devils about thee, that perchance thy soul may be saved." It always reminds me of St. Paul's direction about a wicked Corinthian: "Deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."

Look at this war, brought on by human sin. Look at its awful penalty—bereavement, anxiety, agony. Hell on earth all over Europe. Do we want God to leave the sin and remove the penalty? Brethren, don't you feel that if anything will startle nations to see the hellishness of war it is this awful penalty of suffering?

"Could not God teach us these things," you say, "without suffering? Could not He tell us?" Has not He told us? How many years ago did He tell men, Thou shalt not steal! and, in spite of all the penalty sent upon the human race because of dishonesty, still in the twentieth century men do not know that honesty is the usual path to prosperity. How many years ago did He say to men, Thou shalt not commit adultery! and, through all these centuries, in spite of the penalties, still men have not yet learned that chastity is the condition of love, and unchastity strangles love and buries it.

No, you cannot teach people by telling them. How we fathers and mothers try to do it! How we try to hand over our experiences to our children that they may know from us what we have learned through pain! But they have to go through the same school and learn the lessons where we learned them. The rod must remain in the teacher's hand. Nay, rather in the Father's hand, who is always offering consolation to the loser. The sinner justly suffering for his sins knows he can rise to forgiveness and a new life. The victims of nations' sins dead on the battle-field are being tenderly cared for in the life beyond.

VI

Which immediately suggests that other great cause of human suffering, bereavement through death. No one who has experienced that desires to make light of it. But is it something to charge against God, who, because of the splendid future that He has projected for us, is taking us all one by one into the great adventure of the life beyond? Is God to blame because we do not think about this, and because we will not learn that there is no death, and that what we call death is birth into a bigger life—that Death comes, not as an executioner to cut off our departed from life and love, but rather as God's good angel bringing them more than life has ever brought,

and leading them by a path as full of miracles of soft arrangement as with their birth, to heights of ever-advancing existence?

VII

We are not quite done yet. You feel that so far I have not yet touched the heart of the problem. Your difficulty is not so much the suffering which is the result of sin or the guardian of Nature's law—but the large amount of the world's pain which falls on those who seem quite innocent and undeserving of pain. Yes, that is indeed the heart of the problem, and no man who considers comfort and happiness the chief purpose of God for us can ever solve that mystery.

For with God happiness is not the supreme thing on earth, but goodness. Beside character nothing else matters much. Prayer and Bible and Church and Sacraments, even the Gospel of the life and death of Christ, are only of value in so far as they produce character, in so far as they lift men nearer to God. And somehow it seems, so far as we can see, that character cannot be developed in a world free from pain and trouble. The why and how we may not understand, but the fact that it is so is pretty evident to all. Imagine this world with never a pain or trouble. How could we get trained in this imperfect life? How should we grow heroic if we never had to dare pain?

how should we grow patient if we never had to endure pain, or sympathetic if no one else had any trouble? What a poor, hard, frivolous, unsympathetic world it would be, so far as we can see! You cannot learn these virtues from books or sermons, and I doubt if any of you would say that it would be worth while to leave these things out of life provided we could also leave out pain.

All experience shows that not the men of pleasure but the men of strain and struggle and painful work are the men of influence everywhere; the women who have most sweetened human life and strengthened others by comfort and sympathy are the women who have had to bear trouble in the strength of God. Somehow prosperity does not accomplish that result. It was a wise remark of Carlyle in speaking of the miseries of Dante: "If all had gone well with him, as he wished, Florence would have had another prosperous Lord Mayor, but the world would have lost the poems of Dante."

It would seem that God has of set purpose placed us in a world of troubles and temptations. That is part of our training for eternity. We must not face life thinking that whenever pain or sorrow or disagreeable duties come it must mean that God has failed or that God is not good. No, sorrow is interwoven in the tissues of life. God means troubles and duties to come that will need a firm bracing of the

will and girding of the loins to bear or to do them.

My brethren, there is more than one here to-day who has trouble and pain ; sometimes, perhaps, secret pain that only God knows of. Don't imagine that it came by chance or that God has picked you out for punishment. He means good for you. I think one of the worst things that could come to any man would be this : To have his own way from the cradle to the grave. To have everything he liked just for the asking—never to be forced to say, I wish this, but I cannot afford it ; I want to do that, but I must not do it. Never to have to suffer for himself or for others—never to have to exert himself or deny or sacrifice himself, but to live and enjoy himself and grow fat and bestial like the ox in the stall. Never think that God will allow this for his children for whom He is, as it were, so ambitious ; who were made but a little lower than the angels.

VIII

There is a thought that of late years is always with me when I stand at beds of keenest pain. I mean the extraordinary fact that the existence of sickness and pain is made the means of teaching the tenderness and self-sacrifice at the heart of God by the startling reflection of it in poor imperfect humanity. Oh, the beautiful love and tenderness, and utter, utter self-sacrifice I have seen !

Judge God by the best in yourselves, is an axiom of Christian common sense. Carlyle says that Frederick the Great, with all his unbelief, was unable to doubt that any good quality existing in man must first have been existing in whoever made man. Our Lord says, If ye earthly fathers being evil know how to care much for your children, how much more the Heavenly Father! How much more! That is, He says, whatever of tenderness and love and good you find implanted in yourselves, believe it is a faint shadow of what in infinite degree is in the heart of your God.

Go to the sick-beds—the most agonising, the most hopeless, the most straining on your heart. How the pictures rise before me as I speak! The daughters standing by the dying father in his pain. They are suffering more than he is. The mother with her child in pneumonia, kneeling through the long, terrible nights—night after night, sleepless, by the bedside, careless of her own pain, that she might be able to keep the child in an easy position. I need not illustrate further. You all know; you all would do it.

I have heard thoughtless people say at such times that God cannot be tender or such things would not happen. It is the other side that strikes me. I may not be able to tell why that trouble has come—whether through somebody's sin or some neglected drainage; whether through the wise discipline of God, who must

often let pain come for blessing and good. But I only look at the utter self-sacrifice in the love of these men and women with the agonised faces. Jesus says, If they being evil know how to care thus, how much more God. Surely God must be unutterably tender and self-sacrificing if the dim reflection of God in sinful humanity is so touchingly beautiful.

Men talk wonderingly of the Incarnate God dying for humanity. There is no wonder about it. What else could He do? The mother by her tortured child would unhesitatingly die for it. What else could God do who made that mother such? She need not necessarily be a religious mother. She may be an infidel, a thief, a drunkard, and still she would die for her child if it were needed. Whence has that beautiful thing come into her evil life? It is the reflection of God. It is God's way of teaching. If we won't believe or pray or read the story of Our Lord, even the worst of us may learn thus the tenderness of the Father's heart to all the world.

IX

One thought more. In turning to Christ in sorrow and pain, remember that He knows, He can "put Himself in your place," He has been through it before you. For long, weary hours He hung with throbbing brow and

racking limbs and every nerve quivering with agony. He knows the crushing mental pain that wrings great drops as it were of blood. He was lonely and longed for human sympathy. He had to ask His disciples to stay near and watch with Him in His agony. He had once to cry alone in the desolation of His soul, "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

After all, if God knows and cares, there comes at least the calmness that can wait for fuller light on the problem of pain.

So, when you are puzzled at the existence of pain; when thoughtless, shallow doubters tell you that He can't be all good or all powerful, else He would not permit it—just say to yourself with deep humility: "I don't understand the mystery of pain; I don't understand how God allows it. And yet, on the other hand, I can't imagine a perfect training life without it. And I know that at any rate God knows and cares. So I wait and submit to his mysterious training for myself and for the poor troubled world, and look forward to the life for which He is training us—a life in which "there shall be no more pain."



THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST



XIII

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST

“For we have not an high priest who cannot sympathise with our infirmities, but was in all points tried like as we are, but without sin.”—HEB. iv. 15, 16.

I

FROM the text you see at once where I want to lead your thoughts. That the Lord Jesus understands and sympathises and feels with us, that He can “put Himself in our place” in all the joys and sorrows and perplexities and temptations of our life—surely in this awful war time we need that lesson.

You will notice that I have slightly altered the reading of the 15th verse. The expression “be touched with a feeling of” means just the same as “sympathise with” our infirmities; but the Greek word used is *sympathein* (συμπαθεῖν), the original of our English verb “to sympathise”; and besides, the word which I have used strikes more directly the key-note, as it were, of our subject—THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS CHRIST.

Now, first, it is very important that we

should not narrow the true meaning of this word "sympathy." What do we each mean by it? What idea does it convey to our minds? Is it merely that if some one were in sore need, sickness, or any other adversity, we should pity him, we should feel very sorry for him—is that our notion of sympathy? for remember that is but a small part of its meaning. Sympathy has to do with joy as well as with sorrow—with the merry romping of boys and girls at their play, just as much as with the trouble that is breaking the heart of our friend. Sympathy means not merely the feeling *for* a man, but (as its derivation shows) the feeling *with* him—the putting yourself in his place—the trying to understand and think yourself into the feelings of others, of whatever kind they are, that thus you may be the better able to help and cheer and brighten human life around you. And oh! brethren (let me say in passing), how much brighter and gladder all life would be if people would try to do this—if fathers and mothers would think themselves into the feelings of their children, remembering the days when they were boys and girls themselves—if employers would think themselves into the feelings of their servants—if the strong would try to understand the feelings of the weak—if the happy would realise the position of the wretched—if the man unintentionally offended by another would think himself into the place

of him who had offended him,—in a word, if we would all learn more to get outside the crust of our own miserable little selves, and try more to understand and appreciate and enter into the great world of thought and will and feeling existing in the lives of men and women around us !

When you take the word thus in its full, accurate meaning, I dare say the thought will occur to you that there are many cases where it is not possible for you thus to sympathise with others—cases where, however much you try, you are in a great measure unable to “put yourself in the place” of another, because you have never experienced the same feelings yourself. If, for example, you have never been very poor or very sick, or very sorely tempted to some special sin, it is hard for you to understand, to make allowance for, to put yourself in the place of, one who has.

You get angry with the drunkard who is ruining the peace of his home ; you have no sympathy with the miserable weakness that has caused the breaking of his pledge after a month’s struggle ; you don’t understand the awful craving ; you don’t know how hard the struggle may have been ; you can pity him perhaps ; you can feel *for* him, but you cannot feel *with* him : you cannot put yourself in his place.

The same is true in cases of pain and sickness, and especially in those crushing bereavements

which are pressing on the hearts of England in this terrible war time. If you have never known much of pain or sickness yourself, if you have never had any real trouble in your own life—though you do really pity them, though you would do anything in the world to help them that you could, yet you know you cannot thoroughly sympathise with them like one who has himself known pain and sorrow: you cannot put yourself in their place.

And people do so long for this sympathy: the fervent grip of the hand that shows you understand them, that you have felt the same thing yourself, and know to the full how very hard it is to bear—even that, when you can do nothing else to relieve them, is itself a very great help.

I remember years ago a man in a neighbouring parish to whom had come a crushing family affliction. He didn't care to talk about it with his clergy; he did not go to his most intimate friends, tender and loving though they would have been. No, there was another man, a mere acquaintance, who had had a similar trouble a little while before; and instinctively he turned to him for comfort and sympathy. Whatever else this man lacked he knew at least that he could understand him—that he had been through it all himself, and had felt all its bitterness, and therefore that he could sympathise with him and com-

fort him, as no one else among his friends could.

Now, I think we need these thoughts to help us in understanding our text to-day. Even when we wish to do so, *we* cannot always sympathise with others; but this passage tells us that “we have not an High Priest who cannot sympathise with our infirmities”; having been in all points tempted, *i.e. tried*, like as we are—like us in our pain and weariness and sadness and disappointment—like us in the common experiences of daily life; like us in all things but that in which we could not bear to have Him like us—the folly and wilfulness and sin that are daily spoiling and defiling our lives.

II

“A High Priest who can sympathise.” If such an one is anywhere to be found, do not you think the poor world needs him pretty badly to-day when, outside all our private sorrows and struggles and perplexities and sins, we are sharing in that awful pain at the heart of the Empire? If ever men needed Jesus they need Him now. If we believe that anywhere in the universe is a Divine Being who feels with us it is surely worth while thinking about Him now. It is a big thing that we are asked to believe—that our worries and disappointments, our struggles and temp-

tations, as well as the big sorrows that are breaking our hearts, are all understood by Him who sits to-day in the midst of the throne of God.

A big thing indeed. And therefore it is not enough to go to men with the mere bald statement that Jesus can understand and sympathise. Not even though you get it out of the Bible. No mere statement of the fact, however forcible, could ever bring this home to us as the simple story of His life does. The writer of the passage seems to feel this himself; and therefore it is he adds what I want to emphasise for you, as the greatest help to resting in the sympathy of Christ:—

“HE WAS IN ALL POINTS TRIED LIKE AS WE ARE.” Which would you rather have, merely the statement that He could understand and sympathise with people WEARY AND OVERWORKED; or, in addition to it, that graphic little touch in the Gospel of St. Matthew telling how, after a long, tiring day of preaching and teaching, and healing the sick who were brought unto Him, at evening He went into a little boat to cross the lake, and He was so tired that He fell asleep on the hard flooring of the fishing-boat—so utterly weary that even the howling of the storm around could not awake Him till the frightened disciples shouted in His ear, “Lord, save us; we perish”?

Would you rather be merely told that He understands the feelings and experiences of

PLAIN, HUMBLE, POOR PEOPLE, or be told also that He was born a poor country carpenter's child—that He lived the hard life of a poor man—that He was hungry and thirsty—that He had not where to lay His head—that He was sneered at by the more respectable classes at Nazareth as that "carpenter's son" who had set up to teach His betters?

Would you rather merely hear that He could feel for you when you are tossing on your bed in PAIN AND SICKNESS, or know, in addition, that for long, weary hours He Himself hung with throbbing brow and racking limbs, and every nerve quivering with intensest agony?

Does it not help you to understand His sympathy in SORROW when you learn that He was Himself the Man of Sorrows—that He lived a troubled, lonely life—that the hot tears had trickled down his cheeks? And if you want to go farther than mere sorrow, to be told of that crushing mental anguish that wrung great drops as it were of blood from His brow, in the awful night of Gethsemane? Cannot you hope that He would understand you in the crisis of temptation when you know of His own experience "forty days tempted of the devil"?

Does it not comfort you, when crying to God for your boy gone wrong, to know how He "grieved for the hardness of men's hearts"?

Does it not help you when you are lonely and troubled and longing for human sympathy, or, in those darker days still, when the very heavens seem as brass above you and God seems to have gone away into the darkness, to remember that He had once to beseech His human friends, "Tarry ye here, and watch with me"—that He had to cry aloud in the desolation of His soul, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me"?

Do you not think when a man is poor or sick, or tired, or lonely, or in trouble—and which of us is not so at some time or other?—that such facts as these will help him to understand that Jesus Christ can "put Himself in his place," and enter into his feelings, for which cause it behoved Him to be made in all things like unto His brethren?

III

And if you want still better to understand His sympathy, study still more closely His blessed life on earth; examine:—

HIS INTERCOURSE WITH MEN AND WOMEN LIKE YOURSELF—who came in contact with Him long ago—who might easily have been misunderstood and blamed and condemned by any one of less exquisite sympathy than He.

(1) Look at that story which I have just referred to, where, in the moonlight shadows

of Gethsemane, He was wrestling in His mysterious agony; and His three favourite disciples, the men whom He had chosen out of all the world to be closest to Himself - who should have been watching in sympathy beside Him, and thinking how they could comfort their agonised Master—they were where? Calmly lying on the garden grass, *fast asleep*! They could not watch with Him one hour. Ah! how keenly some of us would have felt—how sharply we should have judged them—if, some day writhing in bitter anguish of spirit, we saw our nearest and dearest, those who professed to love us best, calmly sleeping through it all, leaving us to bear the heavy burden by ourselves, unhelped, unpitied, alone! How little we would try to understand them or excuse them!

Not so the Lord Jesus. He did not blame these disciples; He did not misunderstand them, or misconstrue their conduct. Ah! no. "The spirit is willing," said He, "the spirit is willing; only the flesh is weak." He knew it was not want of love; He knew it was not that they did not care, but that they were poor, weak men, and that they were very tired.

Oh, men and women, should not that story be helpful to us, of Jesus Christ actually excusing, actually making apologies for His sleeping disciples, actually stopping to understand them, and look for the good in them.

where anybody else would have seen only the evil? I think if there is one thing above all else that would draw me to Him, as to a friend, it is that. It is a good thing to have a friend who can plainly see my faults, and fearlessly rebuke me for them; but oh! I think the friend who will be really helpful to me is the man who can see the good in me as well as the evil—who can see the good motive at the bottom of my mistaken action—who can see my hard, secret struggle with temptation—who can understand the sorrow and regret arising in my heart where the world around sees but my failure and my sin.

(2) Such a friend we have in Jesus Christ. Think of it, my brethren, and take comfort from it. Is there some one here to-day very dissatisfied about his spiritual life, feeling that his heart is dull and his devotion cold, and his spirit flagging and growing tired, even at the holy table? He cannot watch with Christ one hour. He feels so discouraged as he thinks how the Lord must regard him, and yet, in his inmost soul, in spite of it all, he knows that he is longing to love Him, and get closer to Him every day.

Take courage, my brother, from His sympathy with the sleeping disciples. Fear not; He will not think it is want of love. He will look for the best in you, and make the best of you. He can sympathise with your infirmities when you feel dull and cold-hearted.

He can put Himself in your place. Perhaps He is saying of you this day—be sure He is, if it is possible to say it of you—"The spirit, I know, is willing; only the flesh is weak."

(3) Or is there some one here very weak in faith, almost inclined to say at times, "I don't believe I have any faith in God"? Is there some one disturbed with sceptical doubts—I don't mean those sham doubts of men who are aping the sceptic because they think it looks clever, but the real, honest doubts that rend the very soul when all that one holds dearest seems slipping away?

My brother, have faith in God. Trust in the sympathy of Christ. Don't be one bit afraid that He will misunderstand you. He could put Himself in the place of the poor doubter who cried, "Lord, help Thou mine unbelief." He could sympathise with the scepticism of Thomas, even while He reproved him for it; and—you remember the story—when those few loving, simple-hearted women came with their spices and ointments in the early morning, while it was yet dark, though their very errand showed an almost utter disbelief in the promise that He would rise again, yet He could put Himself in their place. He knew how hard it was for them to receive such a stupendous mystery; He knew at least that they cared greatly for Him, else they would not have been there at all. And so He accepted them in the blind

confusion of their hearts, and spoke to them kindly and lovingly.

And He is still the same, able to put Himself in your place too; and if you are in earnest in crying to Him in the grey, cold morning of doubt and disturbance, while it is yet dark, for you too the stone will be rolled away—to you too will be granted the blessed vision of the Lord.

(4) Or are you fretting over the weakness that has led you into some sin, your besetting sin, whatever it be? The last time it was committed you vowed on your knees, in God's strength, that you would carefully watch yourself against it in the future. And now you have gone deliberately and yielded to it again, and feel ashamed to ask God for forgiveness any more. And yet you are longing to be forgiven and received as a repentant child again.

Do you remember that cowardly sin of St. Peter, and the going out into the darkness to weep bitterly? Can't you understand the black, bitter thoughts seething in his soul, that awful Good Friday? The Master who so specially loved and trusted him, who had picked him out from among all men as His intimate friend; that kindly Master lying cold and stiff in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, done to death by those who hated Him—forsaken by those who should have laid down their lives for Him; and the last words his

dead Master had heard from him were words of blasphemous denial. Oh! it must have been a bitter time for him.

But did you ever think how that Master was all the time sympathising with His poor sorrowing disciple—not merely forgiving him and pitying him, but actually putting Himself in his place, entering into the feeling of his torturing remorse? Did you ever think of the loving, considerate, thoughtful sympathy of that message which He left with the angels for the women at the tomb: “Go, tell my disciples, and Peter!” *And Peter!* Peter, who is breaking his heart in his remorse—Peter who most of all needed My comfort to-day—tell him especially. Oh! no wonder that Peter should be drawn to Him so closely; no wonder that burst of eager, passionate devotion, “Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest, Thou knowest that I love Thee!”

My brethren, you who are humbly following Jesus Christ, if you want more trust, more joy in your religion, if you want to love Him passionately as Peter of old, try to learn right thoughts of Him; try to know Him even as Peter knew Him. That is the only way to learn to love Him. That is how you have learned to love and trust your wife, your husband, your nearest and dearest friend. Gradually and by degrees their character was revealed to you. You learned to know them

by constant intercourse. And now you have got to love them so that you would give your very life for their sakes. You have come to believe in them so that you would fearlessly trust your all in their keeping. Thus too you must learn to love and trust Jesus Christ. There is only one rule for learning to love and trust anybody, God or man—by learning to know them. Therefore, pray that you may really know Him as you know your nearest and dearest. Study the Bible, and especially the Gospels—not merely to understand doctrines, and explain prophecies, and be wise in religious theories, but to understand God, to get yourself into touch with the great heart of Jesus Christ, for, oh! I think it only needs the real knowledge of that heart to “draw all men unto Him.”

IV

Just one thought in conclusion. Does the perplexing question sometimes rise within you, even though you shrink from putting it into words, “How can that depth of sympathy exist without bringing us relief from all our trouble? Sorrow and pain and disease and death are creeping into our homes and almost breaking our hearts; and He rebukes them not. Some of us have hard, troubled, fretted lives; some of us have secret troubles that we dare not tell to any man. Even poor earthly

sympathy, if it had the power, would remove at once this misery of life; yet Jesus Christ, who has all power even to raise up again our dear ones in the grave, lets these troubles come.

Brethren, I don't want to make light of that difficulty. Better men than you or I have felt it sorely, and we shall never be able to solve it fully till all the mystery of life is over by and by. But, when we remember all that God says and all that God has done to show His sympathy with us, will not some things in our experience help us a little?

Did you never see a mother insisting that the bitter medicine should be taken, and ceasing not at all for the crying of her child? Were you never present at a surgical operation to see the look of terror on the little patient's face, as his father refused to rescue him from his pain? Have you never seen a schoolboy fretting and spoiling his sunny playhours over a hard lesson which his father could do for him in a moment if he would, and yet for the boy's sake the father refuses?

As you think of such things, my brethren, is it too much to ask you to believe in the sympathy of Christ, even though troubles that He could hinder are allowed to come to you? When you know that for your sake He let troubles come to Himself that He could have hindered—pain and sorrow, and weariness and disrespect and misunderstand-

ings—that He compelled Himself, “for us and for our salvation,” to endure the agony of Gethsemane and the Cross of Calvary, though a word would have brought to Him legions of angels; when you know how His heart went forth to sorrow and sickness, how delicately He sympathised with weakness and failings, how thoroughly He “put Himself in men’s place” when others around would have blamed and misunderstood them,—oh! brethren, will we not all try to think about it and pray about it, and take courage from it? And, weak, and cold-hearted, and sinful, and doubting, and wavering as we are, will we not all thank God for this blessed truth, “that we have not an High Priest who cannot sympathise with our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”?

ENGLAND'S " IF NOT "



XIV

ENGLAND'S "IF NOT"

"But if not!"—DAN. iii. 18.

I

"**B**UT if not." Those are the words that I want you to get hold of. Let me read the whole passage from the story of the Exile which the Church teaches us in the lesson for to-day:—

"And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the King, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us, . . . and He will deliver us. . . . *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

We all know that wonderful old story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego and King Nebuchadnezzar and the burning fiery furnace. It takes us back to the Captivity, to gorgeous Babylon, with its wonder and romance and strange barbaric splendour. The story had come down in popular legend—probably it had grown and become idealized and glorified

in the transmission—for hundreds of years. Then came the awful days of the Persecution, when the Book of Daniel was written, when the Jews were trampled down by the fierce tyrant Antiochus; when the temple was defiled by an altar to Jupiter; when the broth of the filthy swine's flesh was poured over their sacred Scriptures; when their sons were forced by sword and faggot to deny the Lord God of their fathers. Then, when men were tempted to barter God and Right for the sake of safety, then was the time chosen to stir their blood by the old national legend telling of the glory of moral heroism, the glory of that splendid faith in God that can scorn all fear of consequences rather than be disloyal to the highest.

II

Two chapters earlier we have the story of the boyhood of these three men. It helps us to understand the story of their manhood.

One day a message had come from the Palace to the slave quarters by the river, and four of the brightest and handsomest boys were chosen from the captives to enter the Royal household and be taught in all the wisdom of the Chaldeans.

It was a splendid prospect for the lads—to be about the person of the mightiest monarch in the world; to look forward to the highest posts in the Civil Service of Babylon.

But there was danger of losing it all. One day it was required of them that they should do something which seemed to be wrong—to drink of the King's wine; to eat of the King's meat, perhaps defiled by some connection with idolatry. At any rate it seemed to them wrong. They tried to escape doing it without giving offence. But when there was no escape they made up their minds, whatever the consequences, "they steadfastly purposed that they would not defile themselves."

It was a big risk to take in Nebuchadnezzar's palace. But they took the risk. Was not such a boyhood as that a fitting prelude to the thrilling story of their manhood which is before us to-day? O fathers and mothers in Canada, God grant you such children in your homes who have steadfastly purposed at any cost that they will not defile themselves by compromising the right!

III

Well, that time the penalty did not come. God gave them favour in the sight of the chief eunuch and their protest was accepted. The great testing-time had not come yet, the testing-time that comes to all men sometime in life when they resolved at any cost to stand for the right.

Many years have passed when their story

is resumed. The boys in the palace had grown to be men and had risen to high position in the Civil Service of the kingdom.

And then—"Nebuchadnezzar the King made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and its breadth six cubits; and he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon."

It was a memorable day for Nebuchadnezzar and for his young Jewish officers. It was the festival of the national god. See how finely the story is told, that brilliant picture where the artist dashes in his gorgeous masses of scarlet and orange and gold. You feel that you are in Babylon and not in quiet Judea. If you have any imagination you are made to see the picture. The great plain of Dura outside of the city and the vast crowds from north and south and east and west pouring in since early morning. All the brilliant costumes, all the pomp and pride of the mightiest kingdom on earth, the splendid army, the dashing cavalry, the chariots like whirlwinds that Ezekiel tells of, the "horses swifter than eagles." Then comes the great muster-roll of the peerage as they pass in long procession, "the princes and governors and pashas and judges and councillors and all the rulers of provinces."

And in the midst of the barbaric splendour, in the midst of the vast swarm of sightseers was the throne of Nebuchadnezzar and tower-

ing above it the hideous image of the idol, the image that Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up.

IV

Thus the writer dashes in his gorgeous picture. Then with skilful hand he brings on the crisis at once. The games and festivities were over. "Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the King hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

He makes the whole picture live before you. The multitudes are shouting, applauding the proclamation. But in the pavilion of the nobles there is silence. Keen, malicious eyes are on the three young Jewish rulers. What will they do? The renegade Jews are watching, the jealous Assyrians are watching, all eyes are upon them, for they are suspected.

Everybody else will fall down and worship. What will they do?

It is a terrible moment. There is before them on the one hand an easy yielding—doing what everybody else does—just bowing down for a moment with the crowd.

And on the other, the displeasure of the King, and worse still, perhaps, of a King who had been a kind master to them. The displeasure of the King, the degradation from office, the triumph of their enemies, the horrible death in the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

And they can avoid it all by just bowing down. It is a sharp test. For escape is easy enough. There were many excuses for yielding. Doubtless the temptation came to them. Doubtless they had wise friends, as we all have at such times, the trimmers who preach compromise, who can make wrong seem nearly as good as right. They would tell them many plausible things. One would say, "Loyalty to the King is your duty as officers." Another would ask, "Why should you be singular when everyone is doing it?" And some smooth, pious old Jew would advise, "You might conciliate the King now, and thus be able to influence him for good later on, and so help His Majesty's immortal soul and incidentally save your own skins." Or here is another wise counsel of friends, "It is a mere matter of form, only a dead piece of metal, what matter does it make whether you thus bow your knee?"

Yes, a dead piece of metal, but it mattered something to bow down to it. The Union Jack is only a piece of woollen stuff, but it matters something to trample on it at the bidding of Germans. The Cross is only a

piece of wood, but there is a story of a young Englishman who refused to save his life in a Mahometan crowd by trampling on that wooden cross. It is these plausible explanations by cowards and trimmers that make the worst temptation in our life-decisions.

V

It is a keen testing-time for these three men, far keener than that of the old boyish days long ago.

Yes, but the old boyish character has grown daily stronger too, as it will in every such man by daily decisions for the right. The trial has not come one whit too soon.

There they stand. Their faces are pale, not with fear but with the excitement of stern resolve, and as they look into each others' eyes in confirmation of their vow there comes the crash of the Royal band—cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music. In a moment see the vast crowd prostrate on the plain and in the midst three men standing alone for God and the Right, three men keeping their souls, daring the mightiest monarch upon earth rather than do what seemed to them wrong.

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us, . . . and we believe that He will deliver us. . . . BUT IF NOT, be it known unto thee, O King, that we

will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

That Bible of ours is a wonderful book.

In all history there is no grander picture than that. No loftier expression of faith than those little words "IF NOT." Do you remember in "Tom Brown's Schooldays" how it stirred the boys to the depth of their hearts? "If not," "If not." It is a high grace to be able to say with faith, we believe that our God is able to deliver us and that He will deliver us, but a far higher grace to say when no deliverance seems coming, "But if not," if there be no deliverance, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image that thou hast set up.

There is something fine in human nature after all. Even the worst of us must admire these men. Even Nebuchadnezzar could not help admiring them. At the close of the chapter I read what looks like a little extract from the Government Gazette: "Then the King promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon." And the reason is plain. If they had been promoted in the province of Quebec or Manitoba I might have my doubts. I might inquire what "pull" they had with the Government. But in the province of Babylon there is no doubt at all as I read the story. It was because they had dared to look into the King's face and say, "But if not."

VI

Brethren, learn to-day this noblest lesson of your holy religion. That in God's sight the highest faith is that which calmly goes forward to the right when there seems no hope of success, no hope of escape, no prospect but failure. When a man looks up into the face of God and says, "I will do the right though the heavens fall"; when a nation looks up into the face of God and says, "I will do the right though I be blotted out of the map of nations for ever,"—to be such a man, to belong to such a nation, is the noblest position in the universe.

There are times when failure is nobler than success, and the man who has learned that is very near to God. And the nation which has learned that has found its soul.

We are hoping that by the grace of God in her awful trouble our poor faulty nation is thus finding her soul. People tell you sometimes of England's faith in God because she is taking her terrible risks for Europe, believing that God must give victory to the right. Nay, England's faith is a higher thing than that. That is faith, too, but it is not the highest. For suppose God does not give victory.

The highest faith says we must do the right regardless of consequence, for God's in His heaven and we leave consequence to Him. Duty only is ours.

I think we are rising to that higher faith. I see poor, noble little Belgium, for the sake of Right, trampled into the mire, with little sign yet that God will deliver her. I see England taking awful risks for a quarrel that is not her own—a quarrel that she might have found excuses to escape from.

We are facing the burning fiery furnace heated some times hotter than it was wont to be heated. We hope, we believe God will deliver us, because we are on the side of right. But victory does not seem so near, nor on bad days does it always seem so certain. Yet the quiet, grim resolve remains. Hear the voice of the old Motherland across the sea: "We will see it through at any cost. The fate of Europe, the fate of civilization and religion is in the balance. Victory is in God's hands. Duty is in ours. If we die, we die. If we fail, we fail grandly. Even if Britain should go down into the dust, let us go down nobly for the sake of Right; for the sake of God." "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." We believe that God will give us the victory, "*but if not*——" And the spirit of this "if not" is touching us all. Our boys are going out, perhaps to come back; but if not, they are going all the same. The brave, tortured mothers are sending them out: "I believe that God can deliver my boy, I pray that God will deliver him; '*but if not*,' my boy must do the right." Oh, surely, surely,

we may hope that this war-time is lifting us up. Two years ago we could not have risen to this. Surely we are beginning to make a new ideal for the new world that shall be after the war.

VII

One little practical word as I close. We have not, all of us, to decide about going to the war. But here, too, in Canada is the plain of Dura and the fiery furnace of failure or the mockery of companions. A very mild little fiery furnace, but too hot for some of us. And here is the image—Money or Success, or Public Opinion, the image which Nebuchadnezzar the King hath set up.

And the cowards and the trimmers are making excuses and bowing down. The Christian who is ashamed to show real interest in righteousness lest his comrades should smile; the young man or young woman who sees evil made light of and dare not protest lest their friends should call them saints; the teacher who shrinks from teaching unpopular truths; the politician who makes excuses for not taking the unpopular side; the business man who fears it will injure his business if he strictly rules it by the law of God. They are the trimmers who dare not stand out, who, when they hear the sound of the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, fall down and

worship the golden image. They are the men who are keeping Canada back from the ideal which we hope for after the war.

Thank God there are others amongst us too who say, in the strength of God, in the power of our holy religion, "I will dare to be singular. I will risk the chatter of mocking tongues. I will suffer the worst that can ever befall, rather than be disloyal to Conscience and to God."

So spake John the Baptist before the incestuous Herod, though he lost his head for it.

So spake Martin Luther with the power of the Papacy against him, "Here I stand, I can do nothing else, God help me!"

So spake the father of the Wesleys in the days of James II.

So spake a poor tailor's apprentice at the stake in the days of Mary.

So spake a man whom I know when his employer threatened dismissal because he would not go against his conscience.

So would speak, I think, some amongst yourselves. I am sure there are some whom I would trust to speak so.

Thank God for the many such in all the ages.

They are the moral regenerators of the world, keeping it from utter rottenness and corruption. They are the proud souls whom the world cannot tame, who dare the fiercest fire of trouble rather than palter with the

right. Aye, and they are the men on whom that fire has no power, and not a hair of their head is singed, and the form of Him Who walks with them through the fire is like unto the Son of God. That was what He said, too, when the great crisis came, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. *But if not, Thy will be done.*"

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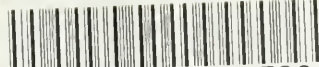
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